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PENNING THE SHIPPER-WORTHY SCREENPLAY: EXPLORATION OF
NETWORK TELEVISION SITUATIONAL COMEDY AND THE CRIME
PROCEDURAL

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of Arts and Humanities

University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Kacie Henderson

June 2013

Advisor: Rodney Buxton

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Abstract

Network television writers often utilize ongoing romantic turmoil as a plot device to form loyal fan bases called “shippers,” viewers who become deeply invested in the romantic relationships between their favorite television couples. For my thesis, I explored the shipper paradigm and the differences between network sitcoms and crime procedurals by creating one spec script *The Big Bang Theory* and another for *Bones*. I used research and my own personal experiences to analyze both series and write episodes that could fit within the established canons of both programs. Through the writing process I came to understand something very important about television: romantic storylines only succeed if hope, risk and obstacles are continually sustained enough to keep ratings high, which in turn sustains the longevity of programs by keeping shippers engaged. Characters may be exaggerated, but good writers use their own lives as inspiration and create characters through which viewers can see their own struggles and aspirations.

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Chapter One: Thesis Proposal

Introduction

From the time of oral tradition, the function of storytelling within cultures has been one of both entertainment and education. In addition to providing amusement, stories are imbued with historical, cultural or moral messages: they teach us what to think and how to act in order to be a successful member of our given culture. Television now functions as the “story-teller” for the modern age: it is arguably one of the most pervasive forms of media due to its affordability, wide popularity and accessibility. In contrast to the “homogenized audience” and content of the late 1960s during which most Americans only had access to three television networks, modern audiences have hundreds of stations to choose from. DVR recording devices and online streaming allow for even more selectivity. The evolving nature of television programming means that the media can attract viewers in new ways: smaller, more active audiences that participate in choosing selective programming from the myriad of available channels mean that networks are scrambling to find shows that appeal to a diverse range of viewers, who form loyal fan bases for these programs.

It is in my best interest as a developing screenwriter to examine different formats to see the fundamental differences, as well as the cross-format norms, in order to understand ways in which screenwriters maintain fan bases, and subsequently, ratings

high enough to tempt advertisers for advertising-based content and to gain new viewer subscriptions in the case of premium cable channels. The goal of this thesis project will be to create one spec script for the half-hour episodic comedy *The Big Bang Theory* and another for the hour-long crime drama *Bones*. This will allow me to explore the intricacies of each format, and allow me to diversify my skills and create a portfolio useful in getting a job in the ever-competitive entertainment television industry. I hope to use both scripts as vehicles through which to discover ways through which sexual tension can retain “shipper” audiences and create an enthusiastic, if pining, fan base eager to witness romantic pairings between their favorite characters. While hopefully my life is not a comedy of errors or a stressful thrill-ride (though it sometimes feels like both), I plan on using limited autobiographical elements to create characters or plausible storylines.

I chose to concentrate my efforts on *The Big Bang Theory* and *Bones* because quite simply, I’m a huge fan of both programs. I faithfully record every new episode on DVR, and have every past season on DVD. I love comedies like *The Big Bang Theory* because the characters are vastly exaggerated versions of my own fan obsessions; while I can faithfully recite every line of the doomed sci-fi series *Firefly* and believe it’s mid-season cancellation was a devastating blow to Joss Whedon fans and science fiction aficionados alike, Sheldon from *Big Bang Theory* suggests that Rupert Murdoch is more evil than Hitler because he owns Fox, the network that cancelled the show. Just as I collect Star Wars figurines, Leonard and Sheldon have walls of collectible action figures,

and even store emergency cash in a hollowed out cavity within Green Lantern's posterior. In contrast, Dr. Temperance Brennan on *Bones* really and truly represents who I could have been and still secretly desire to be: she's a renowned anthropologist and bestselling author. While during undergraduate study, I started out as an anthropology major and participated in several digs before switching my major to English because my university didn't have any courses in forensics or Egyptology. While I studied creative writing, Dr. Brennan achieved wealth and acclaim by penning mystery novels during her spare time. The character manages to be both strong and vulnerable, scientific and noble. She's a feminist character who maintains her susceptibility to pain. She's a character I want to explore. As a true fan of these shows, I possess the necessary knowledge with regard to character backstory, motivation and speaking style that it takes to approach spec writing.

I also feel that these two series in particular appeal to me because the characters are vastly intelligent. Several characters on both shows are scientists with genius IQs. The jokes on *The Big Bang Theory* deal with, for example, the Schrodinger's Cat interpretation of quantum mechanics and the Born-Oppenheimer Approximation mathematical shortcut. Scientific clues in *Bones* require dialogue dealing with geographic coordinates determined by mineral composition of diatomaceous earth and the ability of hemorrhagic tissue to determine if injuries were sustained pre or post mortem: these shows demand that audience members pay attention and learn something, all the while not alienating those of us who are not theoretical physicists, entomologists, forensic anthropologists or mineralogists. Shows on network television that praise

intelligence are a refreshing presence when so many contemporary shows deal with fist-pumping, hormone fueled screaming sessions, or an overreliance on the same tired sex jokes. I love being challenged. I want my interpersonal communications to be intellectually stimulating *and* entertaining. I desire the same attributes in media entertainment, so I personally connect with both programs on a deep level. The popularity of both programs suggests that I am not the only one. I believe writers should be trying to enrich culture, not dumb its audiences down. I can think of no two fictional narrative programs that combine entertainment with intellectual stimulation better. If as a writer I can achieve this delicate balance, I'll be making sure that the show is attracting the educated, higher income viewers that network advertisers so crave. But more than that, I'll be working on entertaining content I can be proud of.

Relevant Literature

Despite the vast array of programming available on television today, trends continue to emerge. According to Atchity and Wong in *Writing Treatments That Sell*, network advertising supported programming gravitates towards topical female issues, reality programming, sci/fi and fantasy, and heroic stories of any kind. In contrast, subscriber cable television is geared towards male audiences, with more violence and female nudity (153). Strong male leads are supplemented by sexy secondary female characters as an attempt to reach secondary audiences of women, and justify the pervasiveness of nudity. CBS (which airs the half-hour situation comedy *The Big Bang*

Theory) appeals to mature female audiences and families, whereas FOX (which airs hour-long crime procedural *Bones*) is younger, hip, trendy, and leaning towards male audiences (155). I find these demographics interesting, because both shows I'm particularly interested in seem to defy these trends. The work also doesn't seem to account for the recent proliferation of female-centered programming on premium cable channels, including *Nurse Jackie*, *The Big C*, *Weeds* and *Girls*. It is possible that these programs are evidence of network attempts to fill in the gaps of their programming by targeting secondary network audiences.

CBS' missing demographic of young men is fulfilled through *The Big Bang Theory*, which primarily features male characters as protagonists. These characters are geniuses in the scientific community and avid fans of comic books, video games, sci-fi/fantasy films, and superheroes, all of which likewise target young males. FOX's heavily male audience base is supplemented through *Bones*, a show that retains male viewership through portrayals of heroism and action sequences, but also attracts female viewers, as it features a female protagonist who is strong, immensely intelligent, independently wealthy and beautiful.

Rodney Buxton's dissertation entitled *Broadcast Formats Fictional Narratives and Controversy: Network Television's Depiction of AIDS, 1983-1991* further delves into network motivation and resultant impact on form and content. Though the larger cultural framework of this dissertation deals specifically with depiction of AIDS on television, he touches on the production style of the series franchise, specifically with regard to

institutional factors impacting topic discussion. Advertising is the basis for network television, so standardized production processes follow a set formula: moments of conflict occur directly before commercial breaks, and episodes typically have a three or four act structure. Some series have mixed episodic, serial and arcing plotlines (84), and in doing so attract and retain young, educated, urban viewers ideally situated to purchase the often expensive products offered by commercial advertisements. However, syndication of shows means that episodes with arcing conflicts are less successful, which can offset the “hook” effect forcing viewers to keep tuning in week after week when syndicated episodes are aired out of original broadcast order. Since I was first drawn to *Bones* after stumbling onto syndicated reruns, I can personally attest to the need for episodes to be accessible for first-time viewers. The instant sexual energy between the main characters and the exciting interrogation scenes kept me interested enough to keep watching. It’s now one of my favorite shows, and I hate to think that I could have missed out because I felt inept jumping into the middle of a plotline. Buxton also discusses conventions of comedy and melodrama: network program producers perceive that sitcom audiences tune in to be entertained, while hour-long dramas have conventionally become the arena to confront potentially controversial social issues, so the nature of conflict will differ by genre. Due to tight production schedules, producers like the use of studio sets rather than location shooting. Screenwriters need to keep this in mind while writing so as to create believable, “producible” scripts, but during specific analysis of sample episodes for both *The Big Bang Theory* and *Bones*, I noticed that a vast array of scenes required

large outdoor locations, scientifically advanced props or dozens of extras. Perhaps then, programs proven successful are given more leeway and higher production budgets, thus allowing for writers to be less confined to existing indoor sets. It is also plausible that episodes requiring costly production budgets are offset by other episodes shot with only minimal presence outside the frequently used studio sets, thus allowing for the production budget to be balanced out.

The Two Series

The Big Bang Theory is a half-hour situation comedy filmed in front of a live audience in Burbank, California. The series is situated around seven central characters. At the heart of the group are Leonard Hofstadter and Sheldon Cooper, two physicists with genius IQs who work at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena. The two are roommates, and have a somewhat uneasy rapport due to their divergent personalities: Leonard is the “geeky” yet endearing straight man character, a sympathetic protagonist who wants to fit into mainstream society despite his social awkwardness, lactose intolerance and general lack of style. He is interestingly the least successful of his immediate family members, a fact that is often pointed out by his emotionally cold mother Dr. Beverly Hofstadter, a sexually-deprived psychiatrist and neuroscientist. In contrast, his roommate Sheldon is the neurotic, obsessive-compulsive funny man whose unreasonable demands give his friends grief. Sheldon can only sit in one location in his apartment due to its positioning to the television and air vents, he lacks understanding of

sarcasm, and has no interest in romantic relationships of any kind. The group is rounded out by Leonard and Sheldon's friends, Howard and Raj, who also work at Caltech. Howard Wolowitz is an aerospace engineer, often made fun of within his social circle because he doesn't have a doctorate. He is a coddled mama's-boy who still lives at home with his overbearing Jewish mother. He speaks several languages, which he uses in attempts to woo women; though he thinks himself a ladies man, he is consistently blown off until he eventually meets and marries Bernadette Rostenkowski. Raj Koothrappali is a particle astrophysicist from a wealthy Indian family who has a mental disorder that prevents him from speaking in the presence of women unless he has consumed alcohol to lessen his nerves. He hates Indian food and loves cheeseburgers despite his Hindu upbringing.

This group of friends has a routine that includes Klingon Boggle, trips to the comic book store, sci-fi movie marathons and online roleplaying video games. Their symbiosis is upset when Penny moves in across the hall from Leonard and Sheldon, and Leonard immediately falls in love with her despite their differences. Penny is the socially astute (though of normal and even occasionally subpar intelligence) beautiful blonde woman who moves from Omaha to pursue an acting career. Though she does eventually land one commercial for rose-scented Preparation H for women, her primary occupation is as a waitress at the Cheesecake Factory. Penny becomes the unlikely fifth member of their social group, and eventually does establish an on-again-off-again relationship with Leonard. Throughout their developing romance, Penny befriends two female scientists

named Bernadette and Amy; the three become their own social circle. Bernadette Rostenkowski worked at the Cheesecake Factory with Penny to pay for graduate study in microbiology before graduating and beginning a professional career. Her diminutive stature and high voice contrast with her love of flesh-eating bacteria and her ability to yell with gravelly intensity. Bernadette meets Howard and the two get married in the finale of Season Five. Amy Farrah Fowler originally comes into the picture when Raj and Howard attempt to set Sheldon up on a blind date, but neurobiologist Amy admits to Sheldon that, like him, she has no interest in physical or emotional attachment to other human beings. She eventually confesses her insecurity over not having friends as a child, and comes to desperately want Sheldon to be her boyfriend, which he agrees to only through signing of a relationship agreement that forbids physical touching or expostulations of emotion.

Most episodes of *The Big Bang Theory* center on these central characters as they attempt to navigate the social world and find personal happiness. The conflicts are usually less than dire: in one episode Sheldon's insistence that he is smarter than everyone causes his friends to form their own trivia team at work, beating him only because he refuses to rely on a correct answer another person has provided. In another, Penny's lack of career advancement causes her to become addicted to online gaming and develop an unusual attachment for advanced gamer Sheldon, much to the chagrin of Leonard when she stops going outside or bathing. Apart from the romantic conflict between Leonard and Penny, most episodes conclude with an end to all conflict or a

funny continuance of a minor conflict that existed before the episode began. Finales breaking with episodic structure have occurred, however, in instances when the couple either makes up or breaks up, as is the case with cliffhanger episode conclusions placed at season finales or during sweeps. Despite the fact that these friends most often drive one another crazy, they always resolve their conflicts and resume their Chinese takeout dinners and movie marathons in the spirit of true camaraderie.

Bones is an hour-long comedy/drama crime procedural in the film production style in Los Angeles (no live audience) that follows FBI Special Agent Seeley Booth and forensic anthropologist Dr. Temperance Brennan as they solve murders. Their unlikely partnership forms when the FBI frequently needs decomposing bodies identified through minute clues, and Dr. Brennan agrees to assist if she can work with Booth and have full participation in the case, including field work. In many ways the two are complete opposites. While Booth is a religious, socially adept former sniper who often trusts his instincts during interrogation to solve cases, Brennan is an atheist who is off-putting and awkward in social situations. She only trusts empirical evidence and scientific inquiry. However, the two bond through shared experiences of traumatic childhoods containing physical abuse or abandonment, and they both prove through their physical abilities and relentless loyalty that they will always come to the rescue of the other. The even footing of their partnership is exemplified when Brennan and her team decipher the clues to save Booth from a murderer called the Gravedigger, who has kidnapped the agent and trapped him on an old navy ship rigged to be blown up for creation of a reef; Booth similarly

saves Brennan from a stalker when he knowingly steps in front of the bullet meant for her. Both characters are very attractive and are pursued by potential mates, but the sexual chemistry between them prevents either from finding happiness with another person. The dynamic of sexual tension and possibility continues as Dr. Brennan becomes rich through writing bestselling crime novels, and through Booth's struggle with a brain tumor that threatens his life. The two tease one another with scientific language, nicknames, and even with what they order at their local diner (Booth insists on calling Brennan "Bones" (a moniker she hates), and Brennan always orders salad but proceeds to eat Booth's fries from his plate). This chemistry often provides comic relief, and is witnessed by their colleagues and friends at the Jeffersonian Institute's elite medical legal lab, who assist in solving complex murders.

Angela Montenegro is a forensic artist specializing in facial reconstruction at the Jeffersonian. She is artistic, emotional and overly sexual, in vast contrast to her best friend Dr. Brennan. Dr. Jack Hodgins is an entomologist and particulate specialist who is the only heir to an immensely wealthy estate, but who continues to work because he loves science. He is also a paranoid conspiracy theorist. Angela and Jack eventually fall in love, get married, and have a son. Dr. Saroyan is a beautiful pathologist who heads the Jeffersonian lab and struggles to keep her genius employees in line while adapting to motherhood when she adopts a teenage girl. Dr. Lance Sweets is a young FBI psychologist assigned to ensure Booth and Brennan can work together effectively, and is often called in to do psychological profiles on suspected murderers.

Each episode begins with the discovery of a corpse and follows the team through evidence gathering and eventual arrest of the murderer. The usual cast is supplemented with one of several rotating interns who assist Dr. Brennan; their distinct personality types (overachieving needy girl, likable guy escaping a troubled past, young Muslim defending both his faith and science to his peers) provide insight and contrast the other characters. The most important element of the plot is that no crime could be solved without every member of the team. The nature of the crimes is wide ranging, from accidental killing of a loved one to premeditated heartless murder, but the events of the case always provide moral insight that changes the characters in small ways, allowing them to cope with their current circumstances or gain new perspective on life. The most current season featured Booth and Brennan in a stable romantic relationship and expanding their family with the arrival of a baby daughter named Christine. The type of romantic conflict has changed from tension and longing to the desire to stay together. The bonds of the characters are still tested, as is the case during the Season Seven finale when Brennan is framed by a serial killer and runs away with her daughter Christine, leaving Booth behind so that he can't be deemed an accomplice and fired from his job, thus preventing him from ever bringing the killer to justice. This background is brief, and I acknowledge that I will provide a more in-depth franchise analysis in my thesis project to facilitate readers' understanding of the series, and to enhance my own writing.

Comedy and the Serial Crime Drama

In *Poetics*, perhaps the earliest surviving work of dramatic theory, Aristotle discusses poetry, comedy and tragedy as imitations of men in action. The work comments on Aristotle's predecessors, chronicles the development of dramatic performance from poem recitation through adding of additional actors, and elaborates on the differences in both content and form of epic poetry, comedy and tragedy. Aristotle defines the tragic, or dramatic, protagonist as being morally superior, with only one fatal flaw to separate him or her from the gods. In contrast, comedic protagonists are vulnerable, with pedestrian desires. This convention is still widely upheld in contemporary television: whereas dramatic heroes show us who we want to be, comedic heroes have the ability to show us who we are. Accordingly, I feel that love, understanding and belonging are natural goals for the comedic characters of *Big Bang Theory*. I must be careful to keep their goals simple. In contrast, I must keep the aims of the dramatic characters of *Bones* both spiritually deep and extremely difficult to attain. This is congruent with the existing structure wherein Agent Seeley Booth wants to redeem himself from his sniper's past by catching as many murderers as people he assassinated while in the army, thus tipping his "cosmic balance sheet". The presence of flaws can be found in both comedy and tragedy, but the nature and prevalence of these flaws differentiate the genres from one another.

Aristotle's examination of drama outlines plot and character conventions that in his opinion made for effective storytelling. One of these conventions is the chorus, a

homogenized group of actors and singers meant to provide a collective voice for the action taking place onstage. The chorus members provided summary, but they also represents society's values and insights. Though the presence of a chorus is typically omitted in contemporary manifestations of tragedy/drama, I believe that certain characters can function symbolically within this paradigm, giving voice to audience expectations, cultural mores and ethical perceptions. This character type could potentially work in a comedy through a straight man character, since identification with characters is the goal of the comedic writer and the natural result of comedic structuring wherein funny characters highlight our own shortcomings. In *The Big Bang Theory*, Sheldon refuses to purchase a birthday gift for Leonard until Penny and Howard point out that gift-giving is a "non-optional social convention." Sheldon immediately accepts their statement without question and proceeds to pick out a present. Similarly, Angela and Jack in *Bones* constantly comment that Booth and Brennan are compatible despite their ideological differences. Throughout the first five seasons of the series Angela urges Brennan to take a chance on a relationship with Booth, telling Brennan that she only argues with her partner about deductive scientific fact over intuitive police work to find an excuse not to be emotionally vulnerable and develop further feelings for him.

In "Why Sitcoms Matter," Jake Martin reinforces the importance of character flaws as a means to motivate action and create comedic conflict within situation comedies. The author suggests that the success of sitcoms is due to "familiarity and trust" (20). This means that the characters must be unfailingly consistent in their

lovability and neurotic eccentricities from episode to episode. Martin suggests that while dramas show us who we want to be, comedies show us who we are. Comedies tend to have an ensemble element which facilitates playing conflicting personality types against one another. I find this especially true with *Big Bang Theory*, in which every character is funny and flawed in a very distinct way: Sheldon's strict (most likely obsessive compulsive) routines from couch placement to fiber intake, Raj's inability to utter a word in a woman's presence without being drunk, and Howard's reliance on his overbearing mother all make audiences scoff, but likewise are the basis for huge laughs. I argue that were the characters to learn and grow enough to alter their personalities, the show would cease being episodic in nature and ultimately be less funny; audience expectations of character flaws make viewers feel as if they are in on a joke, so when characters live up to their expectations, audiences laugh and are able to grow attached to characters, despite their weaknesses and imperfections. The author argues that the characters' flaws allow us to see the humor in our own flaws, and eventually accept those flaws. While crime procedurals like *Bones* will have a moral undertone, Martin argues that sitcoms can be ambiguous morally, so I can write a spec script in which the characters act badly, even selfishly, and never apologize or learn from their actions. Such is certainly the case with Sheldon, and viewers love him for his consistency rather than his goodness.

The archetypal, static nature of certain characters may cause skeptics to deem comedy is inconsequential and flippant. Despite the entertainment industry's conventions, I believe that comedy is an effective way to approach contemporary issues

in a way that allays audience fears. Sitcoms often have emotional power that even dramas don't, according to J. Weinman in "Who's Laughing Now?," because they can elicit a laugh one second and a tear the next, while keeping audiences upbeat due to expectations of eventual conflict resolution and a pseudo-happy ending. Half-hour comedies are currently more successful than any other show genre, including reality shows and the hour-long dramas so lauded by critics and fans alike (Weinman, 2011). They also have a bigger profit return in syndication. Contemporary issues can be introduced and pushed through raunchy jokes more than through dramatic exploration, suggests Weinman. This surprising conclusion should allow me the freedom to discuss "controversial" topics in comedy scripts, but will also make me cautious of approaching certain "hot button" topics in a crime procedural because the protagonists must always represent what the viewer wishes he/she could be. If both characters were to take a uniform stance opposite to that of the viewer on an especially controversial topic, viewers could be put off or even offended. The way that *Bones* effectively approaches controversial issues like sex, religion and child-rearing methods is by presenting various viewpoints without favoring one perspective: that is, Booth and Brennan can clash over these topics and the viewers can decide which perspective to favor. In many ways, *Bones* is then therefore a textbook example of Newcomb and Hirsch's cultural forum, wherein "ideological positions can be balanced within the forum by others from a different perspective...(viewers) find in television texts representations of and challenges to their own ideas, and must somehow come to terms with what is there" (280, 283). However,

just because the sitcom genre can accommodate controversial topics doesn't mean that I can be indiscriminate with regard to selectivity and timing. As *Big Bang Theory* creator and immensely successful current television producer Chuck Lorre points out, "If *Big Bang* gets too edgy or too risqué, it's wrong and the audience tells you it's wrong. Their silence is immediate" (Hibberd, 2010).

The educated audience of *The Big Bang Theory* also notices incorrect formulas and scientific theories. While heightened scenarios of conflict may be accepted *carte blanche*, incorrect science most certainly is not. As *Nature Physics* points out, the minute details celebrate science and reinforce the reality of the comic universe of the show:

The real star of *The Big Bang Theory* is the physics. Sheldon and Leonard convince because their dialogue and hence their characters are properly rounded with accurate physics. No *Star Trek*-style antimatter nonsense here. Instead, there are witty barbs about derivatives and the many dimensions of string theory... each [whiteboard] is exquisitely scrawled in multi-colour marker pen with equations and diagrams, all real physics. It's a delight, and a credit to the CBS producers and their science consultant, UCLA physicist David Saltzberg (p. 337).

Sitcoms have other differences from dramatic formats, according to J. R. Miller in "Sitcom Writing 101: Conflict, Warmth and Humor." Every line of dialogue in situational comedy must either further the plot or deliver a laugh (preferably both). The author suggests cutting all superfluous dialogue to make every word count towards one of these purposes. Because comedic shows must typically tell a story in half-hour format, this advice is a viable way to "cut the fluff" and still get laughs. The author also points out overdone plots and suggests that writers avoid them at all costs, including high school reunions, return of old lovers, men wearing women's clothing, etc. The author also suggests opening the episode in the middle of a crisis or conflict, so as to have an opening

hook with which to draw in the audience. After examining narrative programs in my collection, I've discovered that this not-so-obvious advice is in fact a network convention, effectively mimicking real life and making me immediately invested in the outcome of an episode; in several instances the main characters are already arguing as they enter frame in the first scene. This is certainly the case when during *Big Bang Theory* the four main characters enter frame arguing about the outcome of their paintball game, which clearly they lost as indicated by their outfits being completely covered in splotches of blue paint. Similarly, in *Bones* Booth and Brennan frequently arrive at the crime scene arguing the validity of religion in modern culture or if it is socially permissible to date more than one person simultaneously. Conflict is the most important comedic element, according to Miller, and most good scripts contain more than one type of conflict. Characters should have personality conflicts with most other characters, and these personality differences are what create good dialogue. Every line should be written so that it only fits the personality of the character saying it. All good sitcom characters exhibit some form of vulnerability, which adds warmth and allows the audience to feel superior in some way so that they can be interested in the outcome.

In contrast, interest in the outcome of crime procedurals is largely due to suspense generated by the protagonists' endeavors to solve a murder. Good crime procedurals have multi-dimensional characters fighting crime, each with their own motivation. I argue that the bond between these characters constitutes a "found family," and represents an effective tool writers use to increase viewers' emotional investment in their successes.

Ken Tucker explores the balance between retaining loyal fans while avoiding backstories so intricate as to frighten off new target audiences, using *Bones* as an example of a “vehicle...actually offering the opportunity for anyone curious to join the series with a minimal amount of ‘how-will-I-ever-catch-up?’ anxiety” (Tucker, 2011). *Bones* creator Hart Hanson reinforces this idea by stressing the importance of achieving balance between personal and procedural elements of a drama. Temporal ordering of episodes is important to the flow of the program and is a way to please current fans while welcoming new ones. When interviewed he states that sometimes four or five sentimental, sad episodes are lightened by then scripting a humorous one that concludes a sad story arc. It seems obvious that episode ordering is important, but one potential problem new writers face is the tendency to “lose the forest amongst the trees,” thus being so emotionally invested in the specifics of an episode that they forget to take a step back and see how the content fits in with the rest of the season. Hanson and Executive Producer Stephen Nathan take “a degree of joy in the most hideous things,” and so does the audience (Halterman, 2012). The rotten, decomposing corpses and buckets of blood seem to repulse and simultaneously thrill viewers. This means that when penning a script for the crime procedural, inclusion of bloody, decomposed bodies is not to be shied away from for fear of outraging censors or audiences; hopefully parents are paying attention to content ratings placed at the beginning of each episode to advise viewers regarding the potentially gag-worthy images. I’ve finally become able to eat dinner in front of the television while watching *Bones*, but my family and friends have a strict “wait thirty

minutes” policy similar to that regarding swimming, because the hideousness of the gore stimulates their gag reflexes. Even after the initial discovery of the decaying or mutilated body functions as a hook to draw the viewer into the already unfolding conflict, additional scenes of eye dissection and brain liquefaction continue to disgust and delight audiences.

While over-the-top murder scenarios and action sequences will be accepted by audiences due to their constant inclusion in the crime procedural genre, modern viewers are highly likely to be educated and invested in solving the crime alongside the characters, so they quickly lose attention if the scientific evidence seems contrived. The television series *Bones* was inspired by the life and writings of Kathy Reichs, one of only eighty-two forensic anthropologists ever to be certified by the American Board of Forensic Anthropology (Reichs, 2012). She has travelled the world, identified victims of the 9/11 attacks from ground zero, and has trained FBI agents how to detect and recover human remains. Reichs has used her expertise to pen several best-selling mystery novels featuring forensic anthropologist heroine Temperance Brennan, and when Hart Hanson approached her about creating a primetime drama television format based on her novels, she agreed to the adaptation and acts as producer and in order to satisfy both her own standards and audience expectations. Reichs insists that real science comprise the evidence in the show, which she loves because it’s “character-based, not just a police procedural like *CSI*, and it has humor. It's important for me to have humor in the books, and I wanted that in the show as well” (Memmott, 2011). I agree that the strongest shows

include medical and legal terms and procedures that seem so plausible as to blend in seamlessly to the fabric of the narrative, allowing viewers instead to concentrate on flushing out the murderer of the week and reveling in the changing dynamic between the protagonists. The series recently poked fun at incorrect scientific procedure during an episode in which Dr. Brennan is invited to the set of a movie being made based on her book; the scientists are surrounded by flashing lights, open a chest cavity with the flick of a wrist rather than rib-spreaders, and mispronounce medical terms. Dr. Brennan becomes so distressed over the inaccuracies that she cannot stay invested in the action: she yells “cut” and angers the director.

Reichs points out the potential for dramas to include instances of humor or even the distinct elements of rom-com, just as comedies can effectively include controversial issues and moments of deep emotion, as previously discussed (Weinman, 2011). Since *Bones* and several other procedurals utilize comedic or romantic moments to temporarily lighten the mood within tales of murder most foul, a discussion OF comedic conflict is necessary for both genres. Character comedy is often character romance, according to writer John Vorhaus, so direct emotional war waged between haters who will become lovers necessitates strong forces driving a couple apart, and equally strong ones holding them together (Vorhaus, 1994). They aren’t necessarily opposites, just catalysts for the others’ misery (64).

Shippers, Writers and Fans, Oh My!

One aspect of television's impact on modern society is that of cultivation of similar attitudes. Cultivation analysis conceptualizes the idea of a "homogenous audience" and assumes that although a vast array of programs exists, the majority are designed with profit in mind and therefore appeal to a large portion of television viewers (Signorelli, 1986). Cultivation analysis theory presumes that as a result, common images, values and portrayals of the world consistently reoccur throughout different types of programming, to which the average television viewer will be exposed regardless of preference or taste (Gerbner, et al, 2002). These common images, values and portrayals can create a commonality of values and outlooks known as "mainstreaming." Mainstreaming may prevail over differences in viewer attitudes and behaviors that may result from other cultural and societal influences such as age, race, gender, religion, or socioeconomic status (Gerbner, et al, 2002). While sociologists worry that television's over-reliance on scenes of violence and irresponsible sexuality may have adverse effects on viewers, most modern researchers conclude that television is unlikely to alter viewers' actions, and can be effective at altering perceptions of reality/attitudes if viewers are passive or incredibly young, as is the case with adolescents (Gillespie, 2003; Moore, Miller, Gleib & Morrison, 1995; Morgan, 1982; Morgan 1987; Simmons, 2002; Rivadeneyra & Ward 1999). Cultivation analysis theory has adapted since its advent in the 1960's. Continued studies are not concerned with altering social reality, but are

solely interested in understanding, predicting and analyzing the impact of television viewership on audience attitudes.

While I do think that television writers need to find the delicate balance between achieving high ratings and not taking advantage of audiences, I believe that viewers are active and thus more skeptical of the “alleged realities” portrayed on television than cultivation theory would imply. I believe parents should take responsibility for the viewing behaviors of their children, and that censorship is a dangerous and unappealing quality in any art form. In light of this position, I plan to negotiate the more gruesome aspects of *Bones* by feeling free to include violence and gore, so long as this content serves the purpose of restoring humanity and identity to the victim character and reassert the value of individual human life. The idea of mainstreaming can however offer insight into the form/content norms recurring across shows in both the sitcom and drama formats. Writers seek to capitalize on successful formulas and repeat them with new content to ensure success, and rightly so. The main goal of television writers is to maintain audience attention through commercial breaks, and to create a loyal base of viewers to watch from week to week, thus keeping advertisers pleased and willing to invest in the network. One way that these goals are accomplished is through connecting conflict with the potential for romantic alliances between fictional characters.

One particularly illuminating article on the diehard fan subcultures known as “shippers,” fans deeply invested though they don’t comprise the largest audience, comes from the unlikely source of *Entertainment Weekly* in the article “TV (Relation)shippers:

Just Do It!.”, by Jeff Jensen. “Shippers” are a show’s core audience, and their interactions on fan sites and message boards often influence other fans. *Bones* is cited as a prime example, wherein creator Hart Hanson often goes online to see reactions of fans, who:

resent him for doing his job: sustaining the very chemistry that hooks shippers by producing obstacles (romantic rivals!) And complications (emotional baggage!) designed to keep would-be lovers apart for as long as possible (Jensen, 2012).

A delicate balance must be achieved to satisfy shippers through romantic possibility and tension, while not losing the “noromo” audience (who insist that no romance occur between characters). Accordingly, this is why I believe that when characters infrequently become couples, sex is kept off-screen, as was the case in the 2012 season of *Bones* and the occasional episode of *Big Bang Theory*: Booth and Brennan, or comparatively Leonard and Penny, are never shown engaging in hot-and-heavy action. Kissing and allusion are used in place of scenes containing actual sex.

The convention is that once characters consummate sexual tension, the show loses its magic, so often shippers are teased with dream sequences and doppelgangers rather than the actual pairing. Fans write fan fiction, create music videos for their favorite pairings, and even spar against fans of conflicting show couples online. “Shipping isn’t just a rebel call or DIY wish fulfillment but one more way for fans to be fans in an era in which geek is mainstream and romantic fantasies, dark and otherwise, are all the rage,” states Jensen. The article states that Hanson created *Bones* after reading that women, and not men, decide what to watch in households. This reinforces my previous discussion of

FOX's core audience and illustrates the importance of keeping fans engaged by creating saleable chemistry between protagonists while prolonging actual coupling.

In order to understand shipper fan bases as well as determine if scholars/writers can be fans, and if fans can be writers/scholars in terms of creating content more aligned with real content than indulgent, idealistic fan fiction, I read V. Burr's article "Scholar/'shippers and Spikeaholics: Academic and fan identities at the Slayage Conference on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*," about a similar program with an equally viable fan base. The hybridization of fan and scholar as identity can be met with conflict, as the author experienced when presenting academic papers at a *Buffy* conference: any criticism of fan's favorite characters was met with derision, and questions often dealt with fandom rather than the content itself. My own experiences as a fan fiction writer and beta-reader reinforce the author's observations: fans have a tendency to write narrow, uncritical responses or narrative supplements, unable or unwilling to separate fandom from objectivity when writing. Fans of shows are perhaps best situated to write spec scripts and new episodes for those shows, because they are both invested in the success and endurance of the program as well as well versed in the character's backstories, inside jokes and previous trials. However, a certain objectivity must be maintained because a fan's basic tendency is to write a happy ending for the characters they love, spelling certain doom to the "shipper" fan base, ultimately impacting ratings and viewership so negatively as to threaten the continued survival of the program.

Method

The implied method is deceptively simple: I'll sit down and write scripts, ta-da! However, a comprehensive thesis must include detailed analyses of the two series franchises, and gaining inspiration for these scripts is easier said than done. I'll need to immerse myself into the worlds of these shows. I plan to write an episode of *The Big Bang Theory* that finally takes place at Comic Con, since the characters reference the event often but audiences have never witnessed the characters attending. I plan to reference TLC reality show *Geek Love* (2011) which follows real Comic Con attendees as they try speed dating. Most participants are in costumes, and oftentimes they are more concerned with a potential mate's fandom of specific comics or games than any other facet of their personality. I plan to open my script with Sheldon, the neurotic, annoying super-genius, annoying the rest of his group by insisting he must find one particular action figure or collectible that will complete his collection. Sheldon's girlfriend Amy becomes frustrated over her inability to get his attention and abandons him in line, instead spending time with best friend Penny. In contrast, Leonard is furious that other geeks keep asking for pictures with his girlfriend Penny, thinking she is a sexy "booth babe" hired to hawk new video games. As an aspiring actress, Penny loves the ego boost and does little to discourage them. After Leonard walks off in a huff, Penny, Amy and Raj have a drink. Raj's insistence that he is lonely prompts Penny to suggest speed dating, which both women reluctantly attend with him to lend moral support.

In addition to watching the existing seasons of each program as research into form and content, I plan to conduct in-person research so that my experiences can lend a feeling of authenticity to my writing. According to Ron Suppa, a contributor of *Creative Screenwriting*, “boring person equals boring writer;” research can sometimes best be completed through experience rather than in the solitude of one’s home while searching the internet, so in order to advance my knowledge I must immerse myself in what I hope to write about (Suppa, 1995). With regard to *The Big Bang Theory*, I plan to attend Denver Comic Con this June for an insider glimpse into the world of comic book and sci-fi/fantasy fans. I’ve contacted the marketing coordinator in hopes of securing the right to conduct and record interviews with attendees, and also plan on reaching out to owners of local comic book stores. Should my plan to attend Denver Comic Con fail, meet-up groups in the Denver area range from Batman fans to LARPers and cos-players (live action role-playing enthusiasts and people who enjoy making and donning costumes of their favorite media characters with the intent of getting attention at conventions or parties), so I should have no trouble meeting up with enthusiasts comprising the same subcultures that the show’s characters do.

Bones has the dynamic of a rom-com drama, so I plan to emphasize the differences between the male and female protagonists when dealing with strange circumstances in order to create conflict. While living in Florida I dealt with my home having a sinkhole, which I think would be the perfect way for a buried body to unearth itself as a strange circumstance and catalyst. Also while I lived in Florida, news of a

murder surfaced that will be the basis for a good mystery: a lottery winner named Abraham Shakespeare with humble beginnings was approached by an alleged biographer, who eventually gained his affection and control of his assets. This woman allegedly murdered him, thinking that she would inherit his winnings. The charged suspect was even quoted as stating that she was too clever, from watching television crime shows, to have made the lapses and errors detectives claim she had. Suspect Dorice Moore is quoted as saying, "I am not a stupid person — I watch television. I watch *Bones*. I watch *CSI*. I watch them all" (Vander Velde & Logan, 2010).

With regard to the medical, scientific and legal knowledge required to write a crime procedural, I have several contacts within the legal field. My own knowledge of forensic anthropology is limited, but I still have all reference books from my brief time as an anthropology student, and have come across several useful reference guides to the human anatomy online. If I have any questions for law enforcement, I can contact the Public Affairs Office of local law enforcement agencies and can additionally contact the Writer's Guild of America through their "ask the expert" program, which contains contact information for professionals in several different fields.

I plan for my final thesis to be outlined clearly and provide in-depth series analysis prior to each spec script, in order to provide readers with the necessary background information to effectively read and analyze the episodes. The final form will most likely be outlined as follows:

- Chapter One: Introduction discussing spec scripts, “shippers” and rom-com content.
- Chapter Two: Franchise Analysis of *Big Bang Theory*
- Chapter Three: The Spec Script for *Big Bang Theory*
- Chapter Four: Franchise Analysis of *Bones*
- Chapter Five: The Spec Script for *Bones*
- Chapter Six: Conclusion

Projected Budget

Item	Est. In Kind Contribution	Actual In Kind Contribution	Est. Out of Pocket	Actual Out of Pocket
Scriptwriting Software			\$249 + tax	
Admittance to Comic Con			\$50	
WGA expert fees			\$50	
Research- Gas			\$100	
Research- Food			\$100	
Printing	\$250			
TOTAL	\$250		\$549	

Estimated total Budget: \$800

Timeframe

I plan to complete draft specs throughout the summer of 2012 and spend an extensive period editing and polishing throughout the winter and spring. If time permits I

may audition unpaid actors to do a table read of the scripts so that I can feel out the dialogue and get a better idea of its realism and impact prior to making final edits.

Audience

Spec scripts are rarely produced. They are instead a calling card for writers to prove their worth and eventually gain employment as a staff writer on an existing television program. The audience of these spec scripts is inherently agents and series producers as well as the audiences of the shows themselves, in order to ensure quality content. But more so, these spec scripts are intended for head writers, show runners, agents, managers and producers in the television industry. I hope that by writing scripts for different television formats, I can use my thesis experience as an opportunity to hone the skills I will need for a successful career in television writing and production. With regard to the thesis itself, I hope my own creative process and the methods by which I create these scripts will prove useful to writers of all kinds, from creative writing instructors to film students and narrative filmmakers.

Chapter Two: Franchise Analysis of *The Big Bang Theory*

Denver Comic Con

I wanted to attend Denver's inaugural Comic Con to gain perspective on how the characters might interact at such an event, and I needed to investigate potential sources of conflict for my *Big Bang Theory* script. At the last moment, I miraculously received a complimentary ticket and attended Friday, June 15, 2012, through Sunday, June 17 at the Colorado Convention Center in Denver. I spent several hours on the exhibition floor speaking with attendees, comic illustrators and booth vendors to get a sense of their motivations for attending the event. Interviews were spontaneous and unplanned. I was amazed at how widely the attendees differed. Some people were dressed in detailed, expensive costumes celebrating action figures and video game characters, including the man I saw wearing an Iron Man suit that lit up and had moving robotic parts. Others were dressed professionally in business jackets, trying to build connections for their web comic series or makeup effects academies.

What surprised me most was the number of attendees who were dressed in couples' costumes: in addition to several pairs dressed as Princess Leia and Han Solo or Sookie and Bill from *True Blood*, many couples wore identical t-shirts to find one another in the crowds. Several attendees spoke about how members of their group splintered to attend different panels or events due to varying interests, making such dress

helpful when reconnecting at the busy event. It is from one of these attendees that I learned about Bronies (adult male fans of the animated show *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic*) and the local division of the 501st Legion, a group of *Star Wars* fans who assemble by the thousands to wear imperial costumes, most frequently those of Stormtroopers. I attempted to incorporate references from my conversations with Comic Con attendees into my script, to ensure that the plot was both accurate and enjoyable for lovers of comic book and pop culture.

I also wanted to give the characters plausible events to attend while at the convention, so I made sure to go to as many panels and talkbacks as I could at Denver Comic Con. These included celebrity panels for *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* star James Marsters and *True Blood* star Kristen Bauer. I also stopped by a round of Sci-Fi Speed Dating, during which I gained an interview with event creator and star of TLC television's documentary series *Geek Love*, Ryan Glitch. Glitch was funny and very kind, describing sci-fi speed dating as any other speed dating event. He created the sci-fi speed dating program so that fans of video games, comics and costumed role playing had a safe environment in which to meet people with similar interests. He mentioned that since it was an open event, some attendees could be off-putting to the opposite sex, but he has instituted precautions to make sure that every speed dater feels safe and respected. After observing an entire sci-fi speed dating session and interviewing several participants, most described it as a positive experience, but the women in particular stated that men

tried to use geeky pickup lines in an attempt to get them to laugh. I also incorporated this idea into my script by having Penny and Amy be subjected to all manner of pop-culture themed advances, which I made up by compiling a long list and later choosing those that felt most organic and funny.

I found that Denver Comic Con, while being an incredibly useful tool for me to research the setting of my episode, did not necessarily lend itself to another plot point of my intended script: Sheldon being sold a fake collector's item. The booth vendors at Denver Comic Con were extremely reputable, having gone through a strict application process. I then had to adapt my idea to suggest that the booth vendor was an imposter so as not to damage the reputation of this group, which was so helpful to me during my experiences at Denver Comic Con.

The event provided me with a program guide and pages of notes for reference. I looked back on my research materials as I wrote the episode, trying to reference both the panels and the interactive elements like the exhibitors' booths and how-to sessions. But most importantly, attending the event gave me a good idea as to the excitement and scope of the San Diego Comic Con. The urgency the characters must feel when dressing up and standing in line echoed my own feelings as I lined up before every panel. And I was lucky since I had received a press pass and was guaranteed entry into the panels. Other attendees lined up over an hour in advance for select events, and were unable to get seats because the ballrooms filled to capacity so quickly. It was easy to feel like if I were

separated from my group without a cell phone, I would never be able to find them again. And Denver Comic Con had an estimated 27,000 in attendance in comparison to the estimated 125,000 attendees of San Diego Comic Con (Giuffo, 2012). This suggests that the characters of *The Big Bang Theory* would be even more incapable of finding each other instantaneously in a crowd. I decided to exploit this fact for the purposes of causing romantic tension to escalate between Leonard and Penny for the sake of maintaining the shipper audience.

Research

After attending Denver Comic Con, my preliminary research period consisted of rewatching all existing episodes of *The Big Bang Theory*. This helped me create in-depth character profiles and compile additional information on the franchise, which I then amassed below for use as reference during my writing process. While being time-consuming, rewatching the series allowed me to understand the motivations and speech patterns of the characters, making my story even more plausible for inclusion in the series.

Leonard

Leonard Leakey Hofstadter was born in New Jersey in 1980 and is now an experimental physicist at the California Institute of Technology, also known as Caltech.

He has a Harvard law professor brother named Michael and an unnamed older sister, both of whom his mother Beverly (a neuroscientist, child psychiatrist and author) believes are more successful than he. Constantly striving for affection from his cold mother led Leonard to have severe inadequacy issues including wetting the bed until he was five, and building a robot in grade school designed to give him hugs. Leonard's father was an acclaimed anthropologist who worked with famous archaeologist Louis Leakey and years later had an affair with a waitress in the Princeton cafeteria, prompting Beverly to divorce him without bothering to tell Leonard. Leonard was bullied by peers and had a tough childhood. Rather than celebrating holidays like his birthday or Christmas, his family merely studied their effects on society. Leonard attended Princeton and achieved a doctorate at age 24. He met Sheldon Cooper while applying to a "roommate needed" ad and after signing an extensive roommate agreement, now rooms with him in apartment 4A of their building. He believes that the string theory explains the origin of the universe and frequently works with lasers.

Leonard gets migraines from alcohol, wears glasses due to myopia and is both lactose intolerant and asthmatic,. Male pattern baldness and short stature run in his family, though Leonard only exhibits short height thus far. He enjoys playing "geeky" games like Dungeons and Dragons, the fantasy card game Mystic Warlords of Ka'a (which is fictional, having been invented by the show's writers), and video games including World of Warcraft. He also plays the cello and likes Babylon 5, which Sheldon

hates. Unlike his fellow geeks, Leonard is an everyman who strives to be more “normal.” He frequently wears a hooded sweatshirt under another jacket in the series, with thick-framed glasses and sneakers. Leonard now works at Caltech and has received the Newcomb Medal for his research. During one point he was involved in classified government research about rocket fuel, and it was discovered that his research was so promising that his girlfriend Joyce Kim was in fact a North Korean spy attempting to get secrets out of Leonard. Lucky for him, Joyce Kim defected back to North Korea before he could give away any information.

When Penny moves in from him across the hall, Leonard immediately becomes smitten, claiming that their babies will be smart and beautiful. The two have an on-again-off-again relationship for several years. During breaks from dating Penny, Leonard has also dated fellow Caltech physicist Leslie Winkle, an author named Elizabeth Plimpton, a doctor named Stephanie Barnett, and Raj’s lawyer sister Priya. Leslie Winkle breaks up with Leonard because she disavows string theory, Elizabeth Plimpton is a one-night stand (per her insistence), and Stephanie Barnett ends the relationship with Leonard after he confides that he isn’t ready for her to move in with him. Priya Koothrappali and Leonard date for some time and even maintain a long distance relationship after Priya moves back to India for her career, but Leonard breaks things off when he discovers that Priya has cheated on him with her ex-boyfriend. At the current moment in the series, Leonard and Penny are dating and relatively happy. Leonard has proposed to Penny several times,

but Penny comically rejects him. Penny has confided in him that she loves him but is scared of marriage, so Leonard has made an agreement that he won't propose again. If Penny decides she's ready, she must propose to Leonard instead.

Sheldon

Sheldon Cooper was born in a K-Mart in 1981 and raised in Galveston, Texas. His father George died young due to heart problems induced by fatty foods, and his mother Mary is a creationist who remains the only person that Sheldon will obey. Sheldon's mother always used to sing a lullaby called "Soft Kitty" to him when he was sick as a child, and even as an adult he asks Penny to sing the song to him whenever he is ill. The lyrics go "Soft kitty, warm kitty, little ball of fur, happy kitty, sleepy kitty, purr purr purr." This lullaby is a recurring joke within *The Big Bang Theory* as it represents the rare moment that Sheldon shows vulnerability and the desire for human connection. Sheldon has a twin sister named Missy, who is much more socially adept than he though she is a hostess at Fuddruckers. He also has an older brother named George, Jr. Sheldon has very close relationship with his Mee-Maw (grandmother), who calls Sheldon "Moon-Pie" because "she could just eat him up." Sheldon was teased mercilessly by the other children in his town, but luckily he didn't endure their torment for long: Sheldon began college at 11, was the youngest person ever to receive the Stevenson Award at 14, and earned his first Ph.D. at age 16. He is now a theoretical particle physicist at Caltech and

studies several implications for string theory, including heading an expedition to the North Pole in an attempt to discover magnetic monopoles.

Sheldon is unabashedly socially awkward. He is germaphobic, egotistical and stubborn, possessing an eidetic memory and often being incapable of detecting sarcasm. Sheldon is allergic to bees and also exhibits ornithophobia (fear of birds), hypochondriasis (fear of being sick), and aphephobia (the fear of human contact). He never voluntarily drinks alcohol, but he eats specific food on specific days of the week. His takeout orders are complicated: Sheldon's mandarin chicken must be diced rather than shredded, and it must be accompanied with brown rice, low sodium soy sauce, chopsticks and spicy mustard from a specific Korean market in Pasadena. Sheldon refuses to go to the movies without popcorn, and additionally won't attend alone because no one would be present to assist him should he choke. Upon entry to his apartment, Sheldon offers guests a hot beverage and insists that they take one out of social convention even if they don't want one. Sheldon also only drinks hot chocolate in months containing the letter "R," arranges his cereal by fiber content and despises Greek food.

He shows some signs of obsessive compulsive disorder (obsessive cleaning and the requirement of knocking on a door and stating the homeowner's name three times before they answer) as well as Asperger's syndrome. Sheldon always sits on the far left of the sofa and refuses to let anyone else use "his seat" because the angle facilitates

watching movies as well as conversation, and the cross breeze created by windows and air vents is neither too hot nor too cold. Sheldon also allows himself to go to the bathroom only at scheduled times and insisted that Leonard sign a lengthy roommate agreement prior to moving in. Grounds for expulsion from the apartment include not washing one's feet before entering the shower, refusing to take Sheldon to work, refusing to take him to the comic book store, making fun of trains, changing the visual contrast setting on the TV, talking to him through the bathroom door, changing Band-Aids in front of him, buying generic ketchup, forgetting to rinse the sink, adjusting the thermostat or cooking with Cilantro. He often mocks his peers for their "inferior" intellect: Sheldon first states his IQ as 187 but later amends this statement and asserts that his IQ can't be accurately measured by normal tests. Even so, Sheldon remains unable to drive a car. He embraces his geekiness, speaking Klingon, always wearing superhero t-shirts and having an extensive comic book collection. Sheldon's favorite interests are trains, flags, and science fiction, with a special affinity for Batman, *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, *Doctor Who* and *Firefly*. Sheldon fancies himself a prankster and often follows up attempts with the phrase "Bazinga," his equivalent for "gotcha." For a long time he considered *Star Trek: The Next Generation* actor Wil Wheaton to be his archenemy due to the fact that Wheaton failed to show up to a conference at which Sheldon wanted his action figure signed, but the two are currently good friends.

With regard to romantic partners, Sheldon has attracted (but not reciprocated) interest by graduate student Ramona Nowitzki and dentist Lalita Gupta. His relationship with neurobiologist Amy Farrah Fowler begins when Howard and Raj set Sheldon up on an internet date for their own amusement. Sheldon and Amy originally bond over their disdain of romantic relationships, but Amy has since grown to yearn for physical contact and romantic overtures. Sheldon has agreed to call Amy his girlfriend, because Amy signed a lengthy relationship agreement forbidding physical contact. Amy did kiss Sheldon once when she was drunk, and Sheldon has cuddled and held her hand to comfort her when she became upset (though Amy had to negotiate the terms). Sheldon's attachment for Amy has become clear. Sheldon shows signs of jealousy when other men show interest in her, going so far as to smack Leonard after his friend confided that he enjoyed Amy's company. Though Sheldon refuses to let Amy live with him, he broke his rule of not celebrating Valentine's Day by showing Amy that he trusts her, listing her as his emergency contact at Caltech.

Howard

Howard Joel Wolowitz was seemingly born near Pasadena, as several scenes take place at his mother's house. He was raised Jewish though he no longer keeps kosher dietary laws, and his father abandoned Howard and his mother when he was a child. Howard earned a master's degree in engineering from MIT and is aerospace engineer at

Caltech, having designed several items for the International Space Station. Howard is also instrumental in the alignment of the Mars Rover, and would have received credit for its data indicating life existed on Mars, but he gets the Rover stuck in a ditch while impressing a girl and destroys all proof that he was involved in the project so as to cover his tracks. He is an overprotected mama's boy who is initially confident in his ability to woo women due to the fact that he speaks seven languages, though his sex-obsessed overtures are usually met with sexual harassment lawsuits and pepper spray. Howard has idiopathic arrhythmia and is deathly allergic to peanuts. He wears turtlenecks, dickeys, and large belt buckles with skinny pants and lifted shoes.

Throughout most of the series Howard lives with his overbearing Jewish mother, who is described as obese though she never appears on-camera. Though Howard expresses frustration over her yelling and smothering, he still exhibits childlike behaviors such as expecting his mother to do his laundry and cut his food into bite size pieces. His experience with women started strangely. Howard lost his virginity to his second cousin during his Uncle Murray's funeral, a fact that his friends laugh at every chance they get. Penny's gold-digging friend Christy sleeps with Howard during one episode as long as Howard keeps buying her presents, and in another he engages in a "friends with benefits" relationship with Leonard's ex Leslie Winkle before she dumps him. Finally, Howard meets Bernadette Rostenkowski through Penny and the two bond over their

overprotective parents. The two get married at the conclusion of the Season 5 before Howard left for space.

Raj

Rajesh “Raj” Ramayan Koothrappali was raised in New Delhi with three brothers and two sisters. To attract women he frequently suggests that he is a “slumdog astrophysicist” with humble origins, but in fact Raj grew up the privileged son of a wealthy gynecologist who had in-house servants. He attended Cambridge and now works as an astrophysicist at Caltech. He is also the recipient of *People Magazine*’s “30 Under 30 to Watch” award. Raj lives alone in an apartment with a pet toy Yorkshire terrier, and is Howard’s best friend. He surprisingly hates Indian food and loves bacon cheeseburgers despite his Hindu upbringing. His wardrobe consistently features sweater vests and track jackets. Raj is generally very sweet-tempered and likes shows and books traditionally targeted towards females audiences like *My Little Ponies: Friendship is Magic*, *Sex and the City*, *The Good Wife*, *Bridget Jones’ Diary* and *Eat, Pray, Love*. He also has some gender-neutral obsessions which include the *Harry Potter* franchise and playing karaoke-based video games.

Raj’s most obvious social shortcoming is selective mutism, a condition that prevents him from speaking around women who aren’t members of his family. After trying experimental social anxiety medications that cause him to randomly strip in public

places and have strange physical tics, Raj accidentally discovers that drinking alcohol allows him to suppress his mutism, even if he only imbibes a sip. Early in the series his inability to talk with women prompts Raj to develop an unusually strong bond with Howard, but Raj does have several short one-episode flings throughout the series. These include a deaf golddigger named Emily and Penny's friend Cheryl. In one episode, Raj successfully woos *Firefly* star Summer Glau, but Howard reveals that Raj has been drinking nonalcoholic beer, causing Raj to lose the "placebo effect" and become unable to utter another word in her presence. Raj also develops attachments towards women who pay him kind attention: he has more than once made advances on Penny after she expresses sympathy towards his situation, and the two of them almost sleep together one night after sharing a bottle of wine and discussing their mutual loneliness. Additionally, Raj begins to develop fantasies about Bernadette after she and Howard get engaged, which culminate in Raj having a Bollywood song-and-dance fantasy in which the two kiss. He is currently single, but is lonely and desperately wants a girlfriend of his own.

Penny

Penny's last name has never been stated on the show, a fact which remains a running joke in the series. She was born on a farm near Omaha, Nebraska, to an unnamed mother who has not appeared, and her father Wyatt, who wanted a boy and resultantly pushed Penny into being a tomboy for most of her youth. Penny also has a

sister who once shot her husband while drunk, and a brother who runs a meth lab. Penny was a junior rodeo champion and a bully in high school. After graduation she moved to California to pursue an acting career. She lives across the hall from Leonard and Sheldon in apartment 4B and works as a waitress at The Cheesecake Factory while taking classes at a local community college. Penny has been mostly unsuccessful at becoming an actress, her only roles being a production of Anne Frank above a bowling alley, a commercial for rose-scented Preparation H for Women, and a community theater production of A Streetcar Named Desire.

Penny often illustrates a lack of hard knowledge, but she makes up for this shortcoming with knowledge of popular culture and common sense that the other characters lack. Despite the fact that the men sometimes underestimate her due to her lack of education, Penny frequently beats them at chess and the video game Halo. Her apartment is always messy, and in recent seasons she has shown a tendency to overindulge on wine. Penny is usually very sweet-tempered, but also has a tendency to be a free-loader when it comes to partaking in Chinese takeout without contributing any money. Penny frequently alternates between her waitress uniform, tight casual wear and glamorous clubbing outfits. In the beginning of the series her clothing includes provocative skirts and bare midriffs, but currently Penny sports more womanly, flattering styles. The one thing that remains consistent is her blonde hair and use of makeup. She has a tattoo on her left buttock which she believed to be the Chinese character for

“courage” before Sheldon accidentally saw her naked and informed her that it is in fact the character for “soup.”

At the beginning of the series Penny primarily spends time with the four men in their living room, but since the introduction of Bernadette and Amy is frequently seen dining and shopping with them instead. Originally coming off as somewhat uneducated for the first four seasons, Penny has evolved to express an interest in higher education, attending classes at a local community college though her writing skills are poor at best. Penny loves dancing and hosting parties. She gravitates towards “chick flick” romantic comedies and mainstream music, though her interactions with her friends have allowed her to gain an appreciation for the Halo video games, chess, sci-fi films, and basic knowledge of physics.

At the opening of the series, Penny has just broken up with Kurt, her boyfriend who had cheated on her. She has gone on dates with other men, and for a time rekindles romance with an ex named Zach who is so comically stupid that Penny can’t stand his company. She and Leonard date briefly in the second season, but break up soon after because Penny fears that Leonard will grow bored with her since she isn’t as educated. They date again in the third season until Penny breaks up with Leonard for pressuring her to say “I love you” back to him. They have rekindled their romance as of S5 E13, “The Recombination Hypothesis” and remain dating.

Bernadette

Bernadette Maryann Rostenkowski-Wolowitz has a vague family history, but her parents are Polish and raised her Catholic. Her mother smoked cigarettes while pregnant with Bernadette, which she believes to be the cause of her short height. Her mother also once ran an illegal daycare center in their basement while forcing Bernadette to care for her own younger siblings, causing Bernadette to develop an intense dislike for children. Her father Mike is a retired police officer with extremely conservative political views. Bernadette works at The Cheesecake Factory with Penny until earning her Ph.D. in microbiology, after which she is headhunted by a big pharmaceutical company. Bernadette consequently now earns significantly more money than her husband, Howard. She is extremely short in stature, with wavy blonde hair and glasses. Her wardrobe usually consists of girly dresses and skirts paired with brightly-colored sweaters. Her voice is high until provoked, when she screams in a low, gravelly register that sounds almost exactly like Howard's mother. Bernadette's usually high voice underscores her pleasant, kind demeanor, but she admits that she is a vengeful person and stands her ground during an argument. She doesn't understand the appeal of science fiction or comic books, but supports Howard in his hobbies. She is good friends with Penny and Amy, though her relationship with Penny is stronger due to Amy's social awkwardness.

Bernadette begins dating Howard after Penny sets them up on a blind date. After they became engaged, Bernadette hears about Howard's "creepy" past sexual experiences

and considers breaking up with him, but the two soon reconcile. When Howard was asked to go into space, Bernadette decides she wanted to marry him before he leaves. The two are married by all of their best friends on the roof of the apartment building just before Howard departs for Russia.

Amy

Amy Farrah Fowler's history is largely unknown, though she states that most of her extended family died in a tragic carbon monoxide accident the night before her cousin Irene's wedding. She had webbed feet until age 14, when she severed it on her own while using nitrous oxide from cans of whipped cream as anesthesia. Amy had no friends at all throughout her entire childhood, and the only person who signed her high school yearbook was her mother, who wrote "Dear Amy, self-respect and a hymen are better than friends and fun. Love, Mom." She remains close with her mother, who insists that she date and shave her legs. Amy is a neurobiologist specializing in addiction experiments on rats and monkeys, and she plays the harp in her spare time. She and Sheldon exhibit some similarities in social awkwardness, but Amy desperately tries to make up for a lonely childhood by considering herself popular now that she is friends with Penny and Amy. The beginning of Amy's friendship with Penny was mostly one-sided affection on Amy's part, but the two have genuinely bonded and Amy always calls Penny her "bestie." Amy has long brown hair and glasses. She has never worn pants on

the show, instead wearing long skirts with outdated, shapeless sweaters. Amy's entire wardrobe comes from her dead grandmother, except the underwear, which are "a secret she shares with Victoria."

Amy initially expresses an abhorrence of intimate personal contact, though for some time she is "technically" engaged to a Saudi prince named Faisal whom she met on a fundraising trip for her company. Amy has since embraced her sexuality and frequently tries to seduce Sheldon, who is her boyfriend per a signed relationship agreement. After being asked out by Stuart, the proprietor of the local comic book store, Sheldon becomes jealous and offers to be her boyfriend so long as no physical contact was required. She has kissed Sheldon while drunk and holds his hand at the movies (as required by Sheldon per their contract). However, his rejection of her advances has led Amy to resort to self-stimulation: she volunteers for scientific experiments in which the orgasm is achieved by stimulating the pleasure center of the brain, and has a vibrating toothbrush named "Gerard" which she uses to masturbate. In addition, Amy frequently alludes to an attraction to Penny, both verbally and by trying to kiss her/spy on her in dressing rooms.

Plot

Shows consist of a teaser before the title credits, and three subsequent acts. The final act is typically very short, consisting of only one or two minutes. The total run time of episodes varies, but the average show consists of 22 minutes of programming. With

regard to plot, most episodes are truly episodic, with only minor changes occurring in the characters. Conflicts most often center around minor “story of the week” plots like confronting a former bully, attending a movie premiere, or preparing for a specific research project. However, some major plot points have occurred each season.

Season 1

- Penny moves into the apartment across the hall from Leonard and Sheldon.
- Leonard has a brief relationship with scientist Leslie Winkle that ends because Leonard wants to commit but Leslie wants only physical contact.
- Penny’s ex-boyfriend Kurt shows up to her Halloween party and makes fun of Leonard. This prompts Penny to kiss him, but Leonard sends her home because she is drunk.
- Raj discovers that he can talk to women if he imbibes alcohol.
- Leonard asks Penny out, and she agrees.

Season 2

- After her first date with Leonard, Penny begins dating someone else because she’s worried she isn’t smart enough for Leonard.
- Leonard dates Leslie Winkle again, but she breaks up with him due to scientific theoretical differences.

- Raj is featured in *People Magazine* after discovering a new star.
- Howard introduces Leonard to Dr. Stephanie Barnett, and the two date until Leonard tells her he isn't ready to live with her.
- Penny goes on a date with Stuart, who owns the comic book store. Stuart later tells Leonard that she shouted out Leonard's name while kissing him.
- Leslie Winkle and Howard become "friends with benefits" before she dumps him.
- Sheldon earns the right to head an expedition to the North Pole to study string theory, and invites Leonard, Howard and Raj along. Penny secretly wishes Leonard wasn't leaving.

Season 3

- When the men return from the North Pole, Penny kisses Leonard. When the two try to have private time together, Sheldon discovers that his findings proving string theory were actually falsified by the rest of the men in order to make the trip livable. Sheldon moves home to Texas until the men fly out and convince him to return to Pasadena.
- Raj's job contract expires and he is forced to take a position working for Sheldon in order not to be deported back to India.
- Sheldon's hatred for Wil Wheaton is strengthened when Wheaton exploits Sheldon to win a card game.

- Howard begins dating Bernadette, but they break up after three dates because Howard wants to hold out for an “Angelina Jolie” type.
- Leonard tells Penny that he loves her, and pressures her to say it back until she breaks up with him.
- Howard and Raj sign Sheldon up for online dating, and he is matched with Amy.

Season 4

- Sheldon goes on his first date with Amy. After a disagreement over which scientific field is better, they break up. Sheldon’s mother uses reverse psychology to get them back together by stating that she thinks the two aren’t compatible.
- Howard reconsiders and begins dating Bernadette again.
- Raj’s sister Priya visits from India and sleeps with Leonard.
- Penny’s ex-boyfriend Kurt attends a New Year’s Party with the entire gang. He kisses her in front of Leonard, causing both Leonard and Penny to realize they still have feelings for one another.
- Howard and Bernadette begin living together.
- Priya returns from India. She and Leonard begin a relationship.
- Howard and Bernadette get engaged.

Season 5

- Priya moves back to India, and she and Leonard maintain a long-distance relationship until she reveals that she slept with her ex, causing Leonard to break up with her.
- Sheldon buries the hatchet with Wil Wheaton and the two become friends.
- After comic book store owner Stuart asks Amy out, Sheldon reconsiders their friendship and asks Amy to be his girlfriend. Amy accepts.
- Leonard and Penny begin dating again.
- Howard is invited to go into space.
- Howard and Bernadette get married when Howard's launch date gets pushed up.
- Leonard proposes to Penny during sex, and she rejects.
- The group of friends all officiate Howard and Bernadette's wedding.
- Howard joins NASA's mission to the International Space Station.

Season 6

Season 6 is partial due to the timing of this thesis.

- Penny confesses to Leonard that she loves him.
- Howard returns to earth.

Sets

Several sets are used in almost every episode, and are standing sets for the show. These include Penny's apartment living room/kitchen, Leonard and Sheldon's apartment living room/kitchen, and the hallway that join the two. Other frequently-used sets include Penny's bedroom, Leonard's bedroom, Sheldon's bedroom, the dining room and bar of The Cheesecake Factory, the cafeteria at Caltech, a hallway at Caltech, Sheldon's university office, Howard's bedroom in his mother's house, Bernadette's living room, and the comic book store. *The Big Bang Theory* does however create and utilize several specialized sets for specific episodes, including complicated sets like restaurants, roadsides, parks, and even the international space station.

The Writing Process

Most of the big changes in the show's plot deal with changing romantic dynamics between the central seven characters. This realization strengthened my initial observations about shipper audiences. *The Big Bang Theory* is successful because the show's writers are willing to momentarily tease the audience with moments of romantic bliss between couples, but they maintain interest by constantly alternating which couple is experiencing conflict. I decided then, that since Howard and Bernadette have only recently undergone several relationship changes, to allow them to remain happy newlyweds for the duration of my spec script. As of this time Penny and Leonard are

dating, but both are insecure about the relationship. Leonard feels doubtful because Penny rejects his offers of marriage, while Penny is so happy with Leonard that she believes it is only a matter of time before something goes wrong. Playing off Leonard's doubt will allow him to step out of his usually-meek persona and become Penny's hero, a role which both he and Penny will find reassuring. Sheldon and Amy's relationship has been in a holding pattern for the last couple of seasons. While they are officially a couple, Sheldon's inability to tolerate physical or emotional intimacy prevent both he and Amy from progressing their relationship. Therefore, I thought it wise to throw in an obstacle that will prompt both characters to take drastic action: a romantic rival will force Amy to reevaluate her boyfriend options, and Sheldon must either fight for Amy by realizing he wants to succumb to her advances, or let her go because he realizes she needs (and deserves) more than he is capable of giving her.

Because the characters on *The Big Bang Theory* speak like advanced scientists, the first obstacle to my spec script was my lack of advanced physics or engineering background. As previously noted, the show has physics advisors who assist in the development in storylines, dialogue and punch lines that use real physics principles. After doing about ten hours of research on the subject in the library, my inclination to write physics jokes was thoroughly squashed. One of the most important facets of *The Big Bang Theory* is its adherence to real science, and I just couldn't wrap my head around these complex formulas enough to thoroughly understand them, much less subvert them

into something that could be made funny. The solution to this problem thankfully presented itself when I rewatched all previous seasons of the show on DVD while taking notes.

Since the first five seasons total 111 shows of 22 minutes on average, I watched 2,442 minutes of footage, or 40.7 hours of programming. This was important because I wanted to make sure that all the dialogue I wrote was consistent with the characters. I also wanted to avoid writing jokes that had already been used in some form on the show. While a lengthy process, I was glad to go back and re-experience all of my favorite moments from the series. Watching the seasons helped me to immerse myself in the world of the show and understand the characters on a deeper level, so that I could write how each character would react if presented with the situation in my own spec script.

What I discovered was that while some episodes centered on the research of one or several of the Caltech scientists, other episodes primarily dealt with popular culture like comic books and science fiction films. For example, in S4 E11 “The Justice League Combination,” the guys are invited to a New Year’s costume party at their local comic book store and decide to attend as the Justice League, a team of DC Comics superheroes. They spend the episode deciding who will dress as which character, enlisting Penny to attend as Wonder Woman, and eventually winning the contest. Pop culture episodes emphasize only the allegedly-geeky interests of the characters, such as video games, comic books and sci-fi movies. My previous inclination to write an episode occurring at

Comic Con proved effective at combating my lack of physics knowledge with my familiarity with “nerd” popular culture.

The existing episodes of *The Big Bang Theory* were my most frequently referenced materials during the writing period, especially to determine act length and story arc. I concentrated on the fourth through sixth seasons, since they are the most current and therefore most in line with current advertising breaks and writing styles. I began by roughly sketching out the various scenes, specifying what characters were together and determining potential conflict points to justify the splitting up of groups at Comic Con. I had to pick a specific moment within the timeframe of the series to decide the nature of the personal relationships. Leonard and Penny have started dating and then broken up more than once in the series history, and I had to decide early on where my episode would fit in the canon. If I did not, then I risked having to alter substantial plot elements if Leonard and Penny were to once more alter the terms of their relationship during the year as my thesis writing efforts continued. The most obvious choice was to situate the episode as the Season 6 premiere, since the S 5 finale entitled “The Countdown Reflection,” which features the gang marrying Howard and Bernadette before Howard begins his mission on the international space station. However, I realized that Howard would then be unable to attend the Comic Con festivities. I didn’t want to exclude him since he would have an interesting dynamic with Bernadette as a newlywed, and an interesting conflict with Raj since the two men were best friends who acted as

surrogate spouses for one another before Howard's marriage. For example, the two engage in decidedly domestic behaviors such as using pet names and going on "man dates." I therefore decided that I would place my episode directly after Howard returns from space in S6 E4, "The Re-Entry Minimization."

Interestingly enough, I gained inspiration early on in the writing process by considering what each character would choose for his or her costume. Since Howard and Bernadette just got married, I chose a couples' costume for them which would emphasize Howard's love of classic video games as well as Bernadette's long blond hair: Mario and Princess Peach from the Super Mario game franchise. Though Leonard and Penny are dating, I wanted to add a layer of dramatic tension for the audience, and consider the fact that Leonard is consistently more attached to Penny than she is to him, meaning that Penny would most likely resist a couples' costume. It seemed natural for Leonard to dress as Han Solo from the Star Wars universe because Han is everything Leonard wants to be, but isn't. Han is a tall, mischievous bad boy who plays by his own rules and earns the love of Princess Leia. Penny, as a free spirit and more practical member of the group in terms of dress, would object to wearing Princess Leia's revealing slave outfit because it would be uncomfortable. So for her I chose Buffy from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, a character costume more in line with her "girl next door" character and her blonde hair. Penny, like Buffy, steps up to confrontation when she must, but really just wants to live a normal life.

Sheldon and Amy also have an interesting dynamic as a couple. Though they have signed a formal relationship agreement, Sheldon isn't the kind of person to embrace couples' costumes, or remotely consider Amy's feelings in the matter. Therefore he goes as one of his heroes as stated in S4 E8, "The 21-Second Excitation," Indiana Jones. However, Amy constantly attempts to get Sheldon to develop stronger feelings for her, such as in S5 E23, when Amy plays the Super Mario video game theme song for Sheldon as romantic date music and cooks him spaghetti with hot dog and Strawberry Quick just like his mother used to make. She would choose a costume that would appeal both to her and to Sheldon, who loves Batman so much that he frequently wears Batman shirts and quotes the comics and movie franchise (S2 E1, "The Bad Fish Paradigm"). Therefore Amy would go as Harley Quinn, a character in the Batman universe that acts as Joker's psychiatrist in Arkam Asylum before going mad and becoming a villain herself: since Amy is a neuroscientist, Harley's occupation studying the brain would appeal to her, while dressing as the character would impress Sheldon, who thus far has been unsuccessful getting Amy to read comic books (S6 E13, "The Bakersfield Expedition").

Finally, as a lonely single man Raj makes the perfect Professor Snape from the *Harry Potter* films because like Snape, Raj is intelligent, socially awkward, misjudged as creepy, and perpetually alone. Plus, the choice is consistent with his character because in S5 E17, "The Rothman Disintegration," Raj tries to order a Harry Potter wand online but receives a regular twig instead.

After drafting out the main scenes and deciding which costumes the characters would wear to Comic Con, I was able to go back and write the specific dialogue for each scene. I found that it was easier to write jokes when I had both the situation and the humorous costumes to consider. I even incorporated lines from Han Solo and Indiana Jones, since Leonard and Sheldon so frequently quote the characters to one another. A problem arose as I continued to watch the current sixth season of the show, which aired as I was revising the draft of my script. When S6 E13, “The Bakersfield Expedition” aired on January 10, 2013, the plot centered around the four men attending the Bakersfield Comic Con while dressed as characters from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. I instantly feared that my script was too close to this idea, and wondered if I should pick a new plot entirely. However, as the episode continued that evening, it became clear that the men would never make it to Comic Con, as their car gets stolen and they become stranded in the desert. The episode reaffirmed my tendency to use both the situation and the costumes as fodder for laughs, as this episode contained punch lines centered on both. The episode also led me to believe that my own spec script would fit nicely into the canon, since the characters love to attend Comic Con but are frequently prevented from going; the men also miss Comic Con in S3 E1, “The Electric Can Opener Fluctuation,” because they are on an expedition in the North Pole attempting to prove string theory.

The conclusion of my episode proved challenging. I had initially toyed with the idea of maintaining shipper audience interest by creating tension between Leonard and

Penny throughout the episode, and having Amy break off her relationship with Sheldon for a finale. However, such an ending would be better suited to a season finale or during sweeps. Since I decided that I wanted Howard to be back from space and thus situate my script as the fourth or fifth episode in the season, this formula seemed inconsistent. What I needed to find was an ending that concluded with a funny continuance of the minor conflict that existed before the episode began, while getting viewers to tune in the next week to see if Sheldon and Amy could work out their differences.

Therefore, rather than a breakup I decided I would introduce a romantic rival for Sheldon, a man that Amy meets during sci-fi speed dating who is attentive to her, and provides her with everything that Sheldon can't. This storyline would easily allow the writers to continue the conflict in a fun and exciting way, possibly allowing Sheldon to exhibit unusual instances of possessiveness or human emotion as he realizes that in some way, he needs Amy. Despite the fact that Sheldon's hilarity and appeal stem from his consistently self-centered, neurotic behavior, the character has recently exhibited small steps towards personal growth. These small steps would allow for him to feel jealous at the conclusion of my spec script when Amy tells Sheldon that she has a date with someone else. For example, in S6 E14, "The Cooper-Kripke Inversion," Penny asks Sheldon if he will ever sleep with Amy. He responds by stating "All my life I have been uncomfortable with the sort of physical contact that comes easily to others: hand shaking, hugging, prostate exams. But I'm working on it...it's a possibility."

Since all the other characters are in a relationship and a fundamental plot point in my spec script is Raj's attendance to sci-fi speed dating, I thought it would be a good idea to work in a new love interest for him. The show frequently features celebrity cameos: Scientists Stephen Hawking, Steve Wozniak, Neil deGrasse Tyson, George Smoot, Mike Massimino, and Brian Greene have all appeared on *The Big Bang Theory*, as have *Star Trek* stars Leonard Nimoy, George Takei, Wil Wheaton, Brent Spiner and LeVar Burton. Additionally, Stan Lee, Summer Glau (of *Firefly* and *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*), and Katee Sackhoff (of *Battlestar Gallactica*) are just a few of the pop culture icons who have made appearances. I didn't worry about the actual feasibility of getting a celebrity to agree to appear. The show has a great track record of getting celebrities to make cameos when asked. In addition, the primary purpose of a spec script is to show that I can write in a way that is consistent with existing episodes, which frequently feature cameos. So I chose Zoe Saldana as popular pop culture icon that Raj would admire, and whose publicist would be more likely to urge her to appear due to the upcoming *Star Trek* and *Avatar* sequels. Raj historically has good romantic luck with celebrity women before his alcohol-induced bravery wears off. As previously mentioned, Raj successfully flirts with Summer Glau on S2 E17, "The Terminator Decoupling." Glau even reciprocates interest before Howard undermines Raj's abilities to speak to women when he has had a sip of alcohol by pointing out to Raj that the beer he is drinking is non-alcoholic and that Raj has only been experiencing the placebo effect.

Based on this past episode, I don't think it's out of character for a famous woman like Saldana to find Raj attractive.

After writing and rewriting my script several times, I gave it to my thesis advisor and several friends who are fans of *The Big Bang Theory*. I wanted to gather feedback and ask if they had any questions or concerns with the story. I wasn't sure if the script needed to build more conflict in the beginning of the piece, or if the jokes were as funny to everyone else as they were to me. Everyone said that they liked the fast pace and the jokes, but two people pointed out that Leonard holding Penny's cellphone seemed too coincidental. I took the advice of my advisor and tried rewriting the scene so that Penny asks Leonard to hold her cell phone while she is having her picture taken with people at Comic Con. That way, when she ignores him and he storms off, it's a clearer payback moment for Penny because she can't contact him. After showing the same friends my edited script, they felt that this minor change in plot made a huge difference in the comedy of Penny's situation.

My final steps were to correct minor consistencies in the script. The hardest part about the writing process was being willing to go back and cut out lines. Initially my script was too long, and it took significant effort to step back from my story and be objective. Some lines that I loved had to be cut due to timing, which I determined by reading the script aloud while using a stopwatch. Once I gained the courage to let some

dialogue go, the end product was actually funnier and faster paced because the fluff was cut out.

Chapter Three: Franchise Analysis of *Bones*

Research

The purpose of the murders on *Bones* are not just to give the characters something interesting to do, but to provide them with insight that allows them to gain new perspective on their own lives. In order to create a character-driven plot and understand the circumstances opening my script, I rewatched every episode and took notes on both characters and plot development. Since the first seven seasons total 142 episodes of 43 minutes on average, I watched approximately 6,106 minutes of footage, or 101.75 hours of programming.

The series is loosely based on the novels of Kathy Reichs, a real forensic anthropologist who writes about a beautiful fictional forensic anthropologist named Dr. Temperance Brennan. The show is however vastly different from the book series. I did not read any of the books so that I wouldn't get facts confused by mistake.

Dr. Brennan, a.k.a. "Bones"

Dr. Temperance Brennan was born Joy Keenan, to Ruth and Max Keenan. She also had an older brother named Kyle Keenan. Her parents were bank robbers who assumed new identities in order to keep their family safe from other thieves. Joy Kennan became Temperance Brennan, her mother became Christine Brennan, her father became Max Brennan, and her brother became Russ Brennan. When Brennan was fifteen, her

parents disappeared. Her remaining childhood was spent in traumatic foster family situations; one family locked her in a car trunk for two days as punishment for accidentally breaking a dish. She kept the list of foster homes she was kicked out of on the bottom of her shoe. Brennan was unpopular among her peers; her nickname was “Morticia” when she graduated high school in 1994 in Burtonsville, Maryland because even as a teen, she was interested in death and dissection. The mystery of her parents’ disappearance is later explained when Max reenters her life, stating that a murderous former accomplice caught up with him and her mother, and they had to disappear to protect their children. Max explains that the man eventually killed Brennan’s mother, but he escaped. Brennan attended Northwestern University, and has three doctorates: anthropology, forensic anthropology, and kinesiology.

Before working with the FBI, most of Brennan’s work at the Medico-Legal lab of the Jeffersonian Institute (modeled after the real Smithsonian) dealt with historical remains or genocide victims. However, Special Agent Seeley Booth requests her help on cases and she agrees to assist only if partnered with him on all aspects of cases, including field work. She still works with her colleagues in the lab, including her best friend Angela, but also assists Booth in interrogation and suspect apprehension. Booth affectionately nicknames her “Bones” after her occupation, which Brennan initially resents before growing accustomed to the moniker. Brennan has also written several best-selling crime novels about a forensic anthropologist, and is fluent in several other

languages including Spanish, French, Latin, Mandarin, German, Nynorsk, and Japanese. Her vast knowledge often doesn't include references to popular culture, causing Brennan to be confused during social interactions with Booth and the Jeffersonian team. One running gag in the show is that when confronted with an unfamiliar pop culture reference, Brennan states "I don't know what that means." She does however love Wonder Woman so much that she dresses as the character every Halloween. Brennan is trained in three types of martial arts, including karate, and is also a licensed hunter and amateur highwire performer. She loves dolphins, an affinity she shares with her late mother, as well as pigs due to their high levels of intelligence. Brennan is very beautiful, favoring tribal necklaces and bright colors, but she still dresses practically for the purpose of her job. She does apply makeup, but expresses vehement disdain for plastic surgery and other cosmetic procedures. Brennan's traumatic childhood caused her to adopt a façade of cold logic, but she is in fact empathetic and vulnerable beneath her withdrawn persona. She is a registered foster parent for the sake of her brother, who has stepdaughters.

Brennan started dating late, stating that she has trouble understanding the need for committed relationships but engages in casual relationships to satisfy biological urges. She lost her virginity at age 22, and at one time in graduate school she dated her thesis advisor. Throughout the duration of the show, Brennan has a few short-term partners. She goes on a date with a man who turns out to be the murderer of a victim she identifies. For a short period of time she dates two different men (one for intellectual stimulation

and another for intercourse) before both find out about the other and dump her. She also dates Booth's colleague Agent Sully for a few months, but when Sully quits his job to pursue his dream of sailing around the world, Brennan declines his request to accompany him. For a short time, Brennan then dates Booth's boss, Andrew Hacker, but their relationship fizzles when Brennan realizes that their bond makes Booth feel uncomfortable.

As of the Season 7 finale, Brennan becomes the prime suspect in the murder of her friend Ethan Sawyer. Sawyer was in fact killed by a computer hacker named Christopher Pelant, who frames Brennan to retaliate against her attempts to bring him to justice for his prior murders. When an arrest warrant is issued for Brennan, she knows that if she enters prison she will be at the mercy of Pelant's ability to fake video footage as well as the mercy of several prisoners, who desire to kill her for proving their guilt. She takes her father Max's advice and decides to get off the grid without telling Booth so that he won't be fired from the FBI as an accomplice to her disappearance, as Booth is her only hope of proving her innocence. After Christine's baptism at a Catholic church (per Booth's beliefs), Brennan tells Booth that she would love him even if they didn't have a daughter together, and flees with Christine.

Booth

Special Agent Seeley Booth was born in Philadelphia to Roman Catholic parents. His father was a veteran who became a barber and later an abusive alcoholic. Booth's grandfather Hank rescued Seeley and his younger brother, Jared from their father and raised them. Booth played several sports in high school and later served in the Gulf War, Somalia and Kosovo as a sniper on the US Army's 101st Airborne Division, 75th Ranger Regiment, and various Special Forces teams. During the course of the show he also departs Washington D.C. for Afghanistan, where he acts as sergeant major and trains Afghan forces to fight insurgents. He has endured torture several times during war, though he refuses to talk about the experiences. He did however develop a gambling problem to deal with post-traumatic stress. He only gets this addiction under control when he meets Brennan, because he secretly believes that she is his soul mate. Booth has a son named Parker from a previous relationship with a woman named Rebecca, who refused to marry him when she got pregnant.

His fear of clowns causes him to discharge his weapon at an ice cream truck featuring a clown and a deafeningly loud soundtrack, which has resulted in mandatory therapy sessions. Booth also develops a brain tumor that causes hallucinations, but it is successfully removed with minimal memory loss. He is usually socially adept, but calls scientists "squints," earning their consternation. Booth breaks up the monotony of his government job by favorite whacky ties and socks, and by wearing a "Cocky" belt buckle

featuring a chicken and the word boldly emblazoned in red. Booth always carries dice in his pocket to remind him of his former gambling addiction. He plays hockey on an FBI intramural team to deal with stress. He is extremely honorable and lives his life according to Christian morals, knowing all the Psalms by heart and reciting verses in Latin. In fact, Booth wears a St. Christopher medal and crosses himself when religious conversations arise.

Booth's romantic relationships on the show include a brief "friends with benefits" arrangement with Rebecca Stinson, the mother of his son Parker. He also dates a lawyer named Tessa who breaks up with him after becoming disillusioned by his long work hours. Then he rekindles a secret romance with former flame Camille Saroyan, who works with him at the Jeffersonian, but Booth breaks up with her after realizing that their romance put her in danger from a serial killer targeting Booth. While training soldiers in Afghanistan, Booth begins dating an American journalist named Hannah Burley. Hannah moves to Washington D.C. to move in with Booth, but she rejects his marriage proposal and moves out because she doesn't believe in "forever" relationships.

Brennan and Booth: Their Relationship

Booth and Brennan have several repeating altercations, which serve to heighten their chemistry rather than squash it. Brennan is a vegetarian health food nut, while Booth is addicted to pie and red meat. The pair frequents their favorite restaurant, The

Royal Diner, where Brennan orders a salad and Booth orders pie or a burger and fries. Booth always prohibits Brennan from carrying a gun, but she continues to formulate rational arguments as to why she should carry one, and occasionally manages to sneak them into the field. She always disavows religion for empirical science, but Booth believes in following his gut. They do however share a love of classic rock music and the song “Hot Blooded” by Foreigner. Each has saved the other’s life more than once, leading the two to trust one another completely in the line of duty. Booth realizes that he is still in love with Brennan after a brain tumor nearly kills him. He kisses her, but her fear that she lacks an open heart and will hurt Booth causes her to push him away. After Booth returns from Afghanistan with his new girlfriend Hannah, Brennan realizes that she loves Booth back and admits that she made a mistake in rejecting him. Booth doesn’t reciprocate her feelings, as he has moved on from her rejection and loves Hannah. But after six seasons of resisting their feelings for one another, Booth and Brennan witness the murder of a Jeffersonian intern named Vincent Nigel Murray. The experience brings them closer, and they consummate their feelings and begin a relationship. Their first encounter leads to a pregnancy. Booth and Brennan are now a committed couple with an infant daughter named Christine and a home they purchased from a police auction and renovated themselves.

Angela

Angela Montenegro is the daughter of the fictional alter ego of ZZ Top guitarist Billy Gibbons. She was born in Baltimore and is half Chinese, though her mother has never been featured on the show. Angela's birth name is unknown, as she changed it to "Angela Pearly Gates Montenegro" on her 18th birthday when the name appeared to her in a dream. She pursued a career as an artist before Brennan recruits her to the Jeffersonian to work as a forensic facial reconstructionist. She also has a computer science background, which she uses to innovate various graphics simulators that can reconstruct murder scenarios based on physics calculations. She is a free spirit who describes herself as "more normal" than the other scientists, preferring to think of her job as an art form. She has had many love affairs with both men and women, including a marriage during an island celebration during which she became inebriated and wedded a man she didn't know. She has a good sense of humor and embraces her sexuality fully through both experiences and by referencing sex in work-related situations.

Hodgins

Dr. Jack Stanley Hodgins comes from an extremely wealthy family, and he is the sole heir of the fictional Cantilever Group. He hides his vast wealth from coworkers, preferring to be known just as a scientist, but is eventually found out. He has three doctorates in entomology, botany and mineralogy, making him the Jeffersonian's "bug

and slime” guy. He is an avid conspiracy theorist with sarcastic penchant for competition, naming himself King of the Lab whenever he makes an important discovery. He is funny and extremely giving, sacrificing his great wealth to a hacker so that he could save the lives of innocent children. He loves to create and run scientific experiments, even if the data can be confirmed without their use. Hodgins also has a competitive streak. He constantly vies to discover the piece of evidence that cracks the case. When he does so, Hodgins proclaims himself “King of the Lab.”

Angela and Hodgins: Their Relationship

Hodgins is in love with Angela for some time before working up the courage to ask her out. They date and eventually fall in love, but on their wedding day a government official informs them that Angela was still married to her husband from an impromptu tribal island ceremony. They track him down and persuade him to sign divorce papers, but his reappearance makes both Hodgins and Angela question their trust, causing them to break up. They eventually get back together and get married before having a baby boy named Michael Vincent.

Sweets

Dr. Lance Sweets grew up in abusive foster care situations that resulted in deep scarring on his back before being adopted by a loving elderly couple. He attended the

University of Toronto at age 14 and obtained his master's degree from Temple University before earning doctorates in clinical psychology and behavioral analysis from Columbia and the University of Pennsylvania, respectively. Two weeks before he begins working for the FBI, both of his adoptive parents pass away within one month of each other. He is much younger than his colleagues, and acts as an FBI psychologist. His function begins as mandatory counselor to ensure that Booth and Brennan work well together, causing both parties extreme annoyance. But Sweets soon becomes their personal friend and assists in investigation and interrogation of suspects. He writes a book about their unusual partnership which suggests that they are in love with one another (long before the two begin a romantic relationship), but Sweets doesn't publish it because he fears the book will endanger their working relationship. Booth and Brennan correctly ascertain that Sweets' real motivation for spending time with them was not to write a book, but to find a family, causing Brennan to compare his affection to the imprinting of a baby duck. Sweets' professional work demeanor is sometimes undermined by his youth and love of heavy metal and "geeky" popular culture. He dates Jeffersonian intern Daisy Wick, a neurotic perfectionist, for some time before proposing to her. During the timeframe for which this episode is intended, they remain engaged.

Camille

Dr. Camille Saroyan formerly worked in New York as a police officer and Deputy Coroner of the New York. At an undisclosed time in her youth, she also dated Seeley Booth. She arrives in Season 2 to take charge of the Jeffersonian's forensic department as resident pathologist, but ends up working with Brennan as if they are equals. For some time she and Booth rekindle a romance, but Cam's near poisoning causes both to consider the relationship dangerous to their working environment. After learning that her former fiancée was murdered, Cam adopts his teenage daughter Michelle. Cam places high importance on style and always wears form-fitting dresses with heels in the lab, even while conducting autopsies.

Max

Max Brennan (born Max Keenan) is a convicted felon who reenters his daughter Temperance's life when she and Russ are threatened by Max's old enemy, FBI Deputy Director Kirby. Max kills Kirby to save his children's lives and escapes police custody. Max later allows Booth to arrest him so that he may reestablish a relationship with Brennan, and he is acquitted of Kirby's murder due to insufficient evidence. He overcomes Brennan's skepticism and forms a bond of trust with her, being a trusted guardian to his granddaughter Christine.

The Squinterns

The show also features several Jeffersonian interns, called “squinterns” by Booth, who refers to scientists as “squints” since they look puzzled when analyzing evidence. First there was only one intern, named Dr. Zach Addy, but he was corrupted by a cannibalistic serial killer and knowingly destroyed evidence before being sentenced to a mental hospital. After Addy’s downfall in Season 1, *Bones* has adopted a rotating “intern of the week” model featuring recurring interns throughout the season. Daisy Wick is a perfectionist with interpersonal communications problems. She annoys the entire staff but has a good heart and solid research methods. At the time designated for this episode, she is also engaged to FBI psychologist Dr. Lance Sweets. Asastoo Vaziri is a Muslim from Iran who at first uses a false Middle Eastern accent because he is afraid that people won’t understand his faith unless he is “fresh off the boat.” He has since dropped the accent for his natural Americanized one. Before coming to the lab, Arastoo was a US military translator in Iraq. He continues to write poetry in Farsi despite being exiled from Iran as a teen for writing about democracy and sexual topics. Wendell Brey is a young blond intern who comes from a poor family. He feels that he must be a success so that he can pay back the people in his neighborhood, all of whom contributed financially so that he could go to college. His uncle died in the World Trade Center on 9/11, which continues to cause him pain. While Angela is on a break from dating Hodgins, she and Wendell have a relationship. Now Wendell is her good friend, as well as a good friend of

Hodgins. Colin Fisher is a pessimist and self-proclaimed geek. Clark Edison is a highly motivated vegan doctor with nine siblings who clashes with the other scientists because they have too much interpersonal drama to suit his professional tastes. Finn Abernathy is an intern from North Carolina with a strong accent and a troubled past. He always wears a baseball cap in the lab, and is dating Cam's daughter, Michelle. Lastly, Vincent Nigel Murray is an English intern who combats nervousness by spouting off seemingly unrelated trivia facts from his retentive memory to the Jeffersonian team. During a break from the lab, he wins a fortune on Jeopardy but quickly squanders his million dollar prize money on travel, gambling and alcohol. After a stint in rehab, he returns to become Brennan's favorite intern. Vincent is shot in the chest by sniper Jacob Broadsky (Booth's old rival) and he bleeds to death on the floor of the lab in the arms of Brennan and Booth. His death causes Brennan and Booth to finally begin a romantic relationship. Hodgins and Angela also name their son after him.

Plot

Shows consist of a teaser before the title credits, and either three or four subsequent acts. Seasons 1-7 feature three acts after the teaser, while Season 8 currently features four additional acts. The total run time of shows varies, but the average show consists of 43 minutes of programming. With regard to plot, most episodes follow a "murder of the week" model. Episodes tend to focus on the murder case and the

emotional conflict of the main characters, but episodes during sweeps tend to minimize the murder storyline in favor of exploring the relationship of Brennan and Booth.

Conflicts that cause the victim to be murdered, such as jealousy, mercy, betrayal, and accidental miscommunication, often mirror the situation of the main characters. Several major plot points have occurred each season, which allow the characters to grow and adapt.

Season One

- Booth and Brennan begin their work partnership.
- The team agrees to look at evidence from the conviction of serial killer Howard Epps to ensure his guilt and discover new victims, unintentionally delaying his execution.
- The team goes into quarantine over Christmas after being exposed to a potentially deadly fungus, which causes everyone to grow closer.
- Brennan is shot at and later kidnapped by a corrupt cop working for the mafia. Booth takes a bomb blast meant for her, and while injured he rescues her moments before her kidnapper tries to kill her.
- Brennan discovers that a set of unidentified remains belongs to her mother, who has been missing since her 15th birthday.

Season 2

- Camille Saroyan joins the team as head of forensics at the Jeffersonian.
- The team discovers that Howard Epps has an accomplice committing murders in his name.
- Hodgins and Angela begin dating.
- The team discovers victims of The Gravedigger, a kidnapper who buries victims alive and reveals their location only if substantial ransoms are paid.
- Brennan and Hodgins are drugged and kidnapped by The Gravedigger and buried alive in a car. They use their vast knowledge to communicate evidence to their colleagues, who use that evidence to locate Brennan and Hodgins before they suffocate.
- The team discovers that Booth and Cam are dating.
- Brennan discovers that a set of remains are those of a man intent on killing her. She reunites with her father Max, who has killed her assailant in order to protect Brennan. Max escapes the authorities.
- Howard Epps escapes prison, poisoning Cam and attempting to break into Brennan's apartment and bludgeon her. Brennan and Booth discover his plan and confront Epps. He tries to evade capture by jumping from Brennan's window. Booth can't hold Epps, and the killer falls several stories to his death.

- Cam recovers, and Booth breaks up with her because their personal relationship put her in danger from Epps.
- Brennan begins dating Agent Sullivan.
- Sullivan asks Brennan to sail around the world with him, but she decides not to go.
- Booth is captured and tortured by a crime boss. Brennan contacts her fugitive father and the two rescue Booth before Max escapes again.
- Hodgins and Angela get engaged.
- Angela discovers that she is still legally married to another man on her wedding day to Hodgins. The two flee the ceremony embarrassed, leaving best man Booth and maid of honor Brennan facing each other awkwardly at the altar.

Season 3

- The team discovers several victims of a cannibalistic killer nicknamed Gormogon.
- Angela and Hodgins hire an investigator to find Angela's legal husband and ask for a divorce.
- Tired of walking into and out of his daughter's life, Max Brennan surrenders to Booth.
- Booth and Brennan begin psychiatric counseling with Sweets.
- Sweets and Daisy reveal their relationship to the team.

- Max Brennan goes on trial for the murder of FBI Deputy Director Kirby. He is acquitted when Brennan allows the defense to suggest that she had equal means, motive and opportunity to kill Kirby.
- An acquaintance of a murder victim begins to stalk Booth and becomes jealous of his attachment to Brennan. The stalker tells Booth she will shoot Brennan so that they can be together, and Booth takes the bullet aimed at Brennan.
- The team is informed that Booth is dead, but when attending his funeral they find out that his death was staged as part of a covert operation.
- Evidence related to the Gormogon serial killer explodes in the lab, sending hyper-logical intern Dr. Zack Addy to the hospital. Brennan discovers that the evidence has been tampered with deliberately and rigged to explode by a member of the Jeffersonian. The team is shocked to find out that Zack was recruited as apprentice to the cannibalistic serial killer through the use of logical arguments. He makes a plea of insanity and is committed to a mental institution.

Season 4

- Angela's husband reappears and begs Angela to reconcile with him. He sees that the two are in love and eventually signs the divorce papers, but Hodgins and Angela realize after the ex's reappearance that they aren't ready for marriage. The two break up.

- Booth is kidnapped by The Gravedigger and placed on a retired US Navy ship set to explode. The Gravedigger demands all evidence related to her kidnapping cases, which Hodgins and Brennan deliver. The team discovers Booth's location and the identity of the kidnapper. Brennan and an FBI team in a helicopter rescue Booth moments before the ship explodes.
- After learning that her former fiancée has been murdered, Cam adopts his teenage daughter Michelle.
- Booth begins to hallucinate. Brennan insists he go to the hospital, where Booth discovers that he has a brain tumor that must be removed.
- Booth reacts badly to anesthesia during surgery and slips into a coma. Brennan reads to him from the book she is writing, which causes Booth to dream that he and Brennan are happy nightclub owners who are married and expecting their first child. When he awakes from his coma, Booth can't differentiate between reality and his dream.

Season 5

- Sweets tells Booth that his feelings of love for Brennan are caused by his surgery, but Booth knows that the feelings are real.
- Booth struggles to regain lost memories and marksmanship skills after his brain surgery.

- Brennan has a brief relationship with Booth's Boss, FBI Agent Andrew Hacker.
- Angela has a brief relationship with intern Wendell.
- The team is sealed inside the Jeffersonian by government agents, who demand that the team attempt to identify the cause of death for an unidentified set of remains. The team covertly discovers that the remains belong to assassinated President John Kennedy, and that the likelihood of a single shooter was extremely unlikely but not impossible.
- After a near-death experience, Sweets proposes to Daisy.
- Sweets finishes a book in which he determines that Booth and Brennan are in love with each other but that neither one will admit it. A fellow psychologist disagrees, stating that at least one of them is aware of the attraction. Sweets decides not to publish his book for fear of destroying Booth and Brennan's working relationship.
- Booth confesses his love to Brennan, but she rejects him because she is scared that she doesn't have an open heart like he does.
- Angela and Hodgins are arrested for reckless driving and while confined to a cell, Hodgins asks Angela to marry him. When a judge arrives to sign their bail papers, he also ends up marrying them.
- The team discovers that they will be unable to use the evidence they've collected against The Gravedigger since they are also victims, so Hodgins, Brennan and

Booth all drop the charges against their attempted murderer. The team manages to discover new evidence to convict the killer.

- Brennan is emotionally drained from handling murder cases and accepts a lucrative year-long study in the Maluku Islands to study a possible evolutionary link to humans. Daisy is also accepted to participate in the study, causing her and Sweets to break up when she departs. Booth decides to take a year-long position in Afghanistan training soldiers to fight insurgents. Sweets goes on a sabbatical while Angela and Hodgins travel to Paris so that Angela can study art, splintering the remainder of the team.

Season 6

- The team is reunited in the Jeffersonian after only seven months to save Cam's career and identify the body of a young boy.
- Booth reveals to Brennan that he has a new girlfriend named Hannah, who moves to Washington D.C. and into Booth's apartment.
- Angela reveals that she is pregnant.
- Sweets and Daisy resume a romantic relationship.
- Sweets states that he believes Booth still has feelings for Brennan.
- The Gravedigger is killed by a sniper while walking into the courthouse for her final appeal. The team discovers that the killer is sniper Jacob Broadsky.

- Booth proposes to Hannah, but she tells him she can't commit and moves out.
- Intern Vincent Nigel Murray returns to the lab and makes amends for the transgressions he committed in the past.
- Jacob Broadsky tries to shoot Booth but hits and kills Vincent Nigel Murray instead, causing Brennan to turn to Booth for comfort.
- Broadsky is captured.
- Angela gives birth to a boy named Michael Vincent.
- Brennan tells Booth that she is pregnant, and that he is the father.

Season 7

- Booth and Brennan maintain a romantic relationship throughout her pregnancy.
- Booth's estranged father passes away.
- The team discovers that computer hacker Christopher Pelant has committed several murders, but they are unable to prove his guilt because Pelant alters computer surveillance time codes to provide himself with an alibi.
- Brennan goes into labor while investigating in the field, and Booth delivers their baby Christine in a barn.
- Brennan and Booth go to LA to witness filming of "Bone of Contention," a movie based on Brennan's most recent novel.
- Christopher Pelant kills Brennan's friend and frames her for his murder.

- Brennan takes Christine and goes on the run to avoid arrest.

Sets

Several sets are used in almost every episode, and are standing sets for the show. These include Jeffersonian Institute locations such as the main forensics platform, Brennan's office, Angela's office, Hodgins' laboratory and Camille's autopsy room. Other frequently-used sets include Booth's FBI office, Sweets' office, the FBI interrogation room, the FBI conference room, The Royal Diner, The Founding Father's restaurant and bar, Brennan and Booth's living room/kitchen, and the interior of Booth's car. *Bones* does however create and utilize specialized sets for every episode, including complicated sets with several extras for crime scenes and field work. These include nature areas, concerts, restaurants, roadsides, parks, and suspects' homes.

The Writing Process

Every episode of *Bones* deals with the characters as they try to solve a murder. The first step in my own writing process was to find a plausible murder scenario. The obvious solution for me was to draw on my own life experiences. While living in Florida, my home had a sinkhole and I learned firsthand about the destruction they cause, as well as the process to remediate buildings. Thankfully, my own sinkhole presented no physical danger. But as I thought back to watching the sand funnel away beneath the

ground's surface, it seemed perfect for a buried body to be accidentally unearthed this way. I got out my insurance notes and went back through them to remind myself of terminology, and then first determined who the victim was, how he died, and steps the murderer would take afterwards to escape detection. This was an enjoyable research component because I got to think like a detective. For every step a murderer takes to try to hide his or her crime, more evidence is left behind. I also drew on my knowledge from taking a forensic science class in high school, and my borderline obsessive fandom of *Bones* and the forensic tests contained therein.

The crime for my spec script was inspired partially by a story I read on the news while living in Florida. A man of simple means named Abraham Shakespeare had dropped out of school by the eighth grade and was illiterate. He was also convicted of burglary before winning the Florida lottery and receiving a \$17 million payout in 2006 (Stutzman, 2010). Shakespeare moved into a gated community, purchased a car and bought a Rolex. During that time, Shakespeare told his brother that he would have been better off broke, stating "I thought all these people were my friends, but then I realized all they want is just money" (BBC, 2010). Shakespeare gave away much of his money to people who requested it, even giving money to strangers who wrote him (Dolak, 2012).

One person who came into his life to gain money was Dorice "Dee-Dee" Moore, a woman who befriended Shakespeare on the pretense of writing a book about how people were taking financial advantage of him (Wingard, 2012). Moore convinced

Shakespeare to go into business with her. She bought herself expensive cars and vacations with \$1 million of his winnings. Shakespeare was reported missing in April, 2009, though Moore staged events trying to convince his family and friends that he had either moved or was avoiding people due to requests for money. Moore used his phone to send texts to his relatives as if she were Shakespeare, though he was illiterate, and attempted to bribe various friends and family to lie and say that they had recently seen him (Stutzman, 2010). In January of 2010 his body was found in Plant City, Florida, under a concrete slab in the backyard of Shar Krasniqi, Moore's boyfriend. Shakespeare had been shot twice in the chest by a .38 caliber pistol (Dolak, 2012). Moore was found guilty of first-degree murder and was sentenced to life in prison without parole (Dolak, 2012).

I decided to take this story and use the elements of a lottery winner, a sympathetic brother, and a woman who falsely claimed she wanted to write a book about his success. Then I changed the characters enough to make sure that the villain was unexpected, juxtaposing the all-too-obvious gold-digger villain with an overprotective mother who made a terrible mistake, and then tried to hide it rather than notify the police. In order to make the evidence seem plausible, I researched sinkholes and their repair. I also looked back over notes of years past about indicators of asphyxiation, blood spatter analysis and other forensic indicators.

I had to pick a point in time for this episode to fit into the canon. I could expect for the characters' circumstances to change, but I needed to create one fixed point for my episode to occur so as to prevent continuity errors and constant edits as the story unfolded. When I began writing, the show was in between seasons. I therefore chose to write my spec script as a possible Season 8 premiere. In order to maintain the romantic tension necessary to engage shipper audiences, I decided to prolong Brennan's evasion of capture. Because she didn't tell Booth she was going, Brennan's flight would necessarily cause Booth feelings of abandonment and betrayal, though he would rationalize his situation and determine that Brennan acted in the family's best interests.

An important decision I had to make was deciding which of the two popular show structures to follow. Many episodes of *Bones* begin with bit part actors coincidentally discovering the remains. These episodes progress through the story in a way that emphasizes the murder committed rather than the personal situation of the characters. Each act of these episodes concludes with the reveal of a new piece of evidence that furthers the murder investigation. Other episodes such as premieres like S6 E1, "The Mastadon in the Room" downplay the murder entirely, instead using the investigation to support the conflict occurring between the characters. Each act of these episodes typically concludes with a moment of personal revelation or development of conflict in the personal relationships of the main characters. I found that episodes following this format were most often situated as season premieres and finales, so I closely watched the

premiere episode of every season to determine act lengths. I found that the introductory acts, called “teasers”, of season premieres were longer than those of other episodes, contained more scenes, and usually focused on the evolving relationship between Brennan and Booth. My observations led me to believe that a safe teaser length was between four and eight minutes long. Using the screenwriting convention that one single-spaced page of written screenplay typically translates to one minute or less of screen time, I was able to model my act lengths after those of existing episodes, being sure to conclude each act with a new revelation that would further the investigation or the conflict between Brennan and Booth.

I mapped out my episode by constructing brief descriptions for every scene and then arranging them by act. I wanted the murder scenario to mirror the situation of the characters, so I looked again at “The Mastadon in the Room” (S6 E1). This episode was the most help to me because it took place after Booth and Brennan had been separated for several months and featured several scenes of each character in Afghanistan and Indonesia respectively, handling situations that underscore the absence of their partner dynamic. This situation is very similar to the plot necessitated by Brennan going on the run at the conclusion of Season 7, so I decided to look at the murder scenario in the story to see how closely it served to highlight what Booth and Brennan were going through emotionally. The plot centers on the mother of a missing toddler. She worries if her son is still alive and is relieved beyond belief when he is found in the custody of her

estranged ex-husband. She hugs him tightly, saying “I missed you, I missed you” while Booth and Brennan look longingly at one another, making it obvious that they also missed each other during the long absence. The relationship between the characters in the crime scenario and the characters of the Jeffersonian team is a great literary tool to maintain interest and draw parallels. I felt that my story of a man with a difficult past achieving happiness and security through a lottery win, only to have it ripped unexpectedly and unjustly from him was the perfect parallel to Booth and Brennan, who finally find love after traumatic childhoods, only to have their family ripped apart by a vengeful enemy.

The primary obstacle I overcame was figuring out how to construct a show with romantic tension while maintaining continuity by keeping Booth and Bones out of communication after the events of the Season 7 finale. I found the solution to this problem while watching the 100th episode of *Bones*, S5 E16, entitled “The Parts in the Sum of the Whole.” The episode features Booth and Brennan in Sweets’ office telling him about how they first met. The present day scenes are juxtaposed with flashbacks, in which the Jeffersonian team first comes together to solve a murder. The present scenes deal with the underlying emotional conflict of Brennan and Booth’s unrequited feelings for one another, which they compare to the romantic longing each felt for the other during their first case together. I decided that my spec script could feature Brennan talking to her father Max, and Booth meeting with Sweets to discuss how the separation

could potentially ruin their family dynamic, using a previous case from the beginning of their romance to underscore their points. I knew that the end of the episode couldn't feature Booth and Brennan reunited, but did want to provide a cliffhanger ending that would allow the audience to speculate if the duo would remain a couple. Thus I came up with the idea of Brennan risking being tracked down by Pelant and the FBI to call Booth.

Initially I was worried about the "science speak" that would be necessary for the formulation of clues, but surprisingly this portion of the show was easy to write. I replicated the speech patterns of each member of the Jeffersonian lab using existing lab scenes and researched asphyxiation both in medical textbooks and from previous discussions on the show. Some additional knowledge came from my own experiences dealing with a sinkhole, including my comparison between sinkholes and quicksand. Creating the story of the murder first allowed me to think about what kind of evidence would be left behind, which consequently led me to create the ways in which the scientists could discover and interpret that evidence.

One problem I encountered was *Bones'* deviation from the standard structure for hour-long dramatic television. As I watched season 8, I noticed that the number of commercial breaks has increased and that episodes in Season 8 now feature a teaser followed by four additional acts. I wanted my spec scripts to accurately reflect the most current format of the show, so I had to go back and reconstruct the acts to allow for an extra one.

After writing and rewriting my *Bones* script, I gave it to my thesis advisor, who watches the show every week. I gave another copy to an additional member of my thesis committee, who watches the show only occasionally, but whose significant other is an avid fan. I wanted make sure that the story was enjoyable and accessible to both fans and new watchers so as to mimic the current appeal of *Bones*. The specificity of the dialogue was deemed a success because the narrative voice for each character was consistent with the show. My first draft didn't have a scene in which the body is initially discovered. Instead it began with Booth picking Bones up to travel to the crime scene. It was suggested to me that the script was too far a departure from the typical murder-emphasis show structure, and that I should reorder the first few scenes. This caused me to create four different edits of my script, but the flow didn't work and the story deviated too far in favor of the murder investigation, at the expense of the romantic tension between the main characters and the elements of interest that would engage shipper audiences. Therefore, I fully committed to the *Bones* episodic structure that uses the murder only to underscore elements of Booth and Brennan's changing bond. I changed the sequence of the scenes back to their original order.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

The process of writing two spec scripts was an intense yet gratifying experience. Looking back at the proposal for this thesis, I am conscious of the fact that the final scripts and format of this thesis turned out differently than I expected. I knew that conducting research would be time-consuming, but I never imagined that I would spend over 142 hours alone watching existing episodes to develop backstories and make sure I wasn't writing plot elements already part of the existing *Big Bang Theory* and *Bones* series. Writing my spec scripts was challenging because I had to think from the perspective of every character when writing both their lines and their actions. This process taught me that I am capable of writing full episodes and engaging in each stage of the process, from brainstorming and research to making final revisions. It also showed me that I have the resilience and adaptability to respond to criticism by making adjustments in the name of quality and consistency. Lastly, it showed me that writers who are persistent can find innovative ways of researching and writing without emptying their pocketbooks. I was pleasantly surprised by the amount of money I spent in completing my thesis. With regard to research, I was granted free admission to Denver Comic Con and found answers to my research questions in the library. Comic Con promoters and people I interviewed were largely sympathetic to my mission of writing spec scripts. Some expressed affinity towards *The Big Bang Theory* and *Bones*, while

others were grateful that I was researching both Comic Con and scientific terms so that their depiction would be more realistic in my final scripts. The only costs associated with research were gas to and from Denver Comic Con, food while I was there, and gas travelling to and from the library. I thankfully also received a special student discount on scriptwriting software, which greatly decreased my total expenditure amount, which is as follows:

Budget

Item	Est. In Kind Contribution	Actual In Kind Contribution	Est. Out of Pocket	Actual Out of Pocket
Scriptwriting Software			\$249 + tax	\$130
Admittance to Comic Con		\$50	\$50	\$0
WGA expert fees			\$50	\$0
Research- Gas			\$100	\$34.00
Research- Food			\$100	\$67.50
Printing	\$250	\$250		
TOTAL	\$250	\$300	\$549	\$231.50

The original concept for this thesis project came from my love of *The Big Bang Theory* and *Bones* as well as the realization that if I was to take on the role of screenwriter, I should write what I know and what I'm passionate about. As a shipper audience member who enthusiastically roots for a happy ending for Leonard and Penny, as well as for Brennan and Booth, I wanted to balance the difficulty of writing dynamic romantic relationships with the objectivity needed to maintain viewership for the purpose

of network television. Then, I wanted to write an episode of each show that would not only fit into the canon, but also explore the romantic relationships of the characters in new ways that these veteran shows haven't done before. I was going to use my fandom as the primary resource for writing each spec script, but then I realized that it was my objectivity and intense research that really allowed me to insert myself into these stories. I was able to consider what I, as a fan, wanted the shows to deliver to me in terms of storyline, but in addition I was able to look at each character's back story and the arc of each season to take on the point of view of the characters. These dynamic characters that I enjoy watching every week are so developed that when I plucked them up and deposited them into situations of my own creation, they led me on the right path through the plotline.

I've never really been comfortable with showing my vulnerability to strangers. Perhaps this is why my previous career as an actor caused me so much stress, and why self-assured characters like Sheldon, Brennan and Booth appeal to me. I used to think that putting too much of myself into scripts would lead to a "Mary Sue" effect that transformed my scripts from legitimate pieces to works of self-indulgent wish-fulfillment known as fan fiction. This thesis process changed my mind. Feedback from my committee members and other people who read my initial drafts made one thing clear: the most memorable pieces of dialogue are those that stem from my own experiences and personality. Now I know that the point isn't to completely distance myself from my

writing and allow the characters to completely lead the story. The point of writing for television is identifying the struggles and characteristics of these fictional characters that reside within me, and using my own desires to speak through them to the audience. Through this process I began to understand that viewers don't just connect to characters, or even live vicariously through them. Both television writers and viewers are loyal to and affected by television programs because they see themselves staring back from the television screen, and learn how to cope with life's struggles by identifying with the characters in these dynamic stories.

It was difficult writing emotional, romantic scenes because I felt particularly vulnerable expressing such sensitive emotions. But looking back at my thesis proposal, I recalled that vulnerability is why these characters interested me in the first place. I think the circumstances of my personal life heavily influenced my writing style. I found that I wrote the most during times that I was especially stressed or emotional, because the process provided me with the same catharsis as watching these shows. During my proposal defense, my committee members expressed concern that I had not written enough as to why these two programs in particular appealed to me emotionally. While I certainly had my reasons, I was reluctant to open up that much about why *The Big Bang Theory* and *Bones* do more than entertain me. I have always felt that professionalism centers on control over one's emotions. When I was bullied or despondent as a child, my personal motto was "never let them see you cry." Looking back at my scripts now, I

stand by them as examples of my ability to infuse my writing with legitimate desire, dismay, and even anguish. My scripts don't have an overly formal feel because the messages needed to be conveyed in an appropriate manner that is consistent with both programs. I do agree that it was difficult for me to express in my pitch proposal the emotional connections I have with these characters. But I think this process will allow me to feel more comfortable accessing difficult emotions while writing in the future.

The project kept changing throughout my writing process. The largest change I faced was the formatting of my scripts. At first I used word processing software for writing, but the formatting was sloppy despite my best efforts. Then I downloaded a free scriptwriting software program and reformatted my scripts entirely. A successful Hollywood screenwriter visited my campus and graciously agreed to look at my newly-reformatted specs. He immediately told me that if I was serious about writing for television, I needed to invest in professional-grade screenwriting software. He informed me that scripts for sitcoms and hour-long dramas are formatted differently, and to avoid making mistakes I should use the templates preinstalled in my script software for each program. The purchase was a difficult one to make. I think I may have choked up a bit, but the ease with which I could format my content and the professionalism of the product made the investment worthwhile. Since *The Big Bang Theory* and *Bones* are both popular shows that are used to write spec scripts, the software conveniently came with templates preinstalled, complete with correct spacing, alignment and scene headings. For

example, actor directions for *The Big Bang Theory* are written in all capitalized text, whereas in *Bones* the actor directions are written in normal text with character names underlined when they first appear. I had read plenty of scripts before, but trying to format screen directions, parentheticals and scene breakdowns on my own was a whole different story. Originally I planned on following each series franchise analysis with its corresponding spec script, but using professional screenwriting software Final Draft made me reconsider this idea. Because the page numbers wouldn't make sense if renumbered for inclusion in the body of this thesis, both scripts are found in appendices with independent sets of page numbers. I also planned on holding a staged reading of both scripts to hear how the dialogue would sound when read, but I was unable to get the necessary amount of people to commit due to time constraints. However, the most important changes didn't involve formatting or even the storylines themselves. As I continued to write, I realized what I really wanted to say with both scripts: we have little regulation over the circumstances and struggles of our lives; hope is risk, but it gives us control enough to first survive, and then thrive.

Looking back at the proposal for these scripts, one of my goals was to use them as vehicles through which to discover ways that sexual tension can retain "shipper" audiences and create fan bases eager to witness romantic pairings between their favorite characters. I believe that my final scripts leave audiences slightly satisfied due to small romantic victories, but still leave viewers wanting to tune in after to witness the

resolution of new conflicts I created. My favorite part of my *Big Bang Theory* script is the moment in the conclusion, during which Penny recognizes Leonard's moment of heroism after defending her against photo-hungry nerds, and Sheldon discovers that he may lose Amy. After confessing to Penny that he fears she is ashamed of him, Leonard has a moment of validation when she tells him she is proud to call him her boyfriend. But he doesn't get to have the upper hand for long, because Penny agrees to attend next year as Han Solo and Princess Leia only if Leonard agrees to be the one wearing the metal bikini. Additionally, Sheldon's moment of consolation over Amy's presence ends when she tells him she has a date with another man. These moments remind me that life's small victories always lead to new challenges. My favorite part of my *Bones* script is interestingly opposite: I love the moment when Booth and Brennan's obstacles as a couple seem insurmountable during the conclusion of the script. Booth questions if he should have rekindled a romance with Brennan, while Brennan wonders if she will ever get to go home to Booth. These moments of heartache are made bearable through the small addition of hope, when Booth picks up the phone and hears Brennan's voice on the line. This moment reminds me that no matter how bad things may get in life, there is always a reason to struggle on.

The conclusion of this project doesn't mean that I will cease to be involved with these two scripts. I plan to continue building a portfolio of work, and hope that the messages contained in these scripts inspire people to laugh, to grimace, to feel anything at

all. I don't plan on submitting these scripts to a studio at this time, but I am in the process of registering them with the Writer's Guild of America and having more people read it for additional exposure. Despite the amount of time and the frustrations I experienced while writing these scripts, I plan on continuing work in this field. I arrived to graduate school not knowing if I wanted to write for television or film. I certainly had no clue as to what genres appealed to me most. Now I have narrowed my focus to writing for television, because this experience has taught me that I am most interested in characters that span several years rather than an hour or two: the writing is a greater challenge and more fulfilling for me. I still love both the sitcom and crime procedural formats, and would love to work as a staff writer for a network television show that has intelligent characters. This project taught me about myself as a writer, but also as a person. I'm glad I had this opportunity to showcase my sense of humor and hone my writing skill.

Watching every episode of *The Big Bang Theory* and *Bones* and then writing episodes of my own was a huge undertaking. But it was unquestionably a labor of love. At the beginning of this project I stated that the anthropological function of storytelling within cultures is to teach us what to think and how to act. What I realized very early on in this process is that there has never been a story written that doesn't include an element of love: be it romantic, intellectual, professional or personal, every Jungian archetype to every episode of fist-pumping reality television deals with some sort of love. That's why

these stories stay with us long after the credits role, and why shipper fans can't get enough of their favorite characters. I love these series, and I love storytelling. I will never stop doing what I love, and will leave you with a quote from Dr. Temperance Brennan in *Bones* episode "The End in the Beginning":

You love someone, you open yourself up to suffering, that's the sad truth. Maybe they'll break your heart, maybe you'll break their heart and never be able to look at yourself in the same way. Those are the risks. That's the burden. Like wings, they have weight. We feel that weight on our backs but they are a burden that lifts us. A burden that allows us to fly (S4 E26).

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Appendix A:
Spec Script for The Big Bang Theory

THE BIG BANG THEORY

"The Convention Contingency"

A spec script by

Kacie Henderson

UNIVERSITY OF DENVER
Master's Thesis Spec
MFJS Department

"The Convention Contingency"

CAST

LEONARD.....JOHNNY GALECKI
SHELDON.....JIM PARSONS
PENNY.....KALEY CUOCO
WOLOWITZ.....SIMON HELBERG
KOOTHRAPPALI.....KUNAL NAYYAR
BERNADETTE.....MELISSA RAUCH
AMY.....MAYIM BAILIK

GUEST CAST

IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

WOMPRAT THE MASKED MAN.....TBD
STRANGE MAN.....TBD
SHY MAN.....TBD
WOLVERINE.....TBD
MASKED WOMAN.....ZOE SALDANA
GLASSES GUY.....TBD
WOOKIE.....TBD
PERSISTENT NERD.....TBD
DR. HORRIBLE.....NEIL PATRICK HARRIS

COLD OPENING

FADE IN:

INT. LEONARD AND SHELDON'S APARTMENT- LATE EVENING

LEONARD IS DRESSED AS HAN SOLO AND HE STANDS ALONE IN HIS LIVING ROOM. HE WHIPS A LASER BLASTER FROM A HOLSTER AND AIMS IT AT AN IMAGINARY FOE, RAISING HIS EYEBROW IN A MOCK SEXY WAY. HE THEN COCKILY PLACES IT BACK IN HIS HOLSTER AND PRACTICES THE ACTION AGAIN. SHELDON ENTERS BEHIND HIM, DRESSED AS INDIANA JONES.

SHELDON
(in excitement)

It's here! It's finally here!

LEONARD

Indiana Jones... I always knew someday
you'd come walking back through my
door.

SHELDON

Leonard, where is your costume? We
all agreed to put them on before we
got in the car. It was all in the
itinerary I sent out on Google docs.

LEONARD

I'm wearing my costume. I'm Han Solo.

SHELDON

A rogue-ish smuggler and space pirate
turned hero? I hardly think so.

(MORE)

"The Convention Contingency" Script Page 2
CONTINUED:

SHELDON (CONT'D)

In those pants you look more like a
member of the Brady Bunch.

HOWARD AND BERNADETTE ENTER THE APARTMENT DRESSED AS MARIO
AND PRINCESS PEACH. KOOTHRAPPALI FOLLOWS BEHIND, DRESSED AS
PROFESSOR SNAPE.

LEONARD

Great costumes, you guys. How was
your week?

WOLOWITZ

It was just peachy!

BERNADETTE

Since we were already taking time off
work to do Comic Con, Howie and I
decided to take an extra few days and
stay at the beach. Like a belated
honeymoon.

WOLOWITZ

Between the sunburn and the sex, this
morning I was so dehydrated that
Bernie had to go get me some
Pedialyte.

"The Convention Contingency" Script Page 3
CONTINUED:

BERNADETTE

His mother recommended it. Anyways,
we're glad to be back, but I wish our
honeymoon never had to end.

KOOTHRAPPALI

Oh who are you kidding? It didn't
end. In the car they were so lovey-
dovey I thought we would crash. And
they wouldn't pull over for me to get
a milkshake and tater tots.

WOLOWITZ

I told you. There's no time for
breakfast. Ignore him, he's been
downing mini bottles so that he can
talk to the geek girls. It turns out
Snape's real Veritaserum is raspberry
pucker.

SHELDON

Enough requisite chitchat. Comic Con
awaits for no man... or heir to the
Mushroom kingdom.

THE GROUP PROCEEDS TO THE DOOR AND WE:

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

THE GROUP PROCEEDS INTO THE HALLWAY AND SHELDON KNOCKS ON PENNY'S DOOR.

SHELDON

Penny and Amy. Penny and Amy. Penny
and Amy.

AMY OPENS THE DOOR AND PRANCES OUT IN A RED AND BLACK JESTER'S OUTFIT. PENNY FOLLOWS, WEARING A LEATHER JACKET.

SHELDON (CONT'D)

(to Amy)

Harley Quinn? Amy, I'm impressed. I
didn't know you liked the Batman
comics.

AMY

She was the Joker's psychiatrist in
Arkam Asylum before going mad herself.
As a neuroscientist, I was cautiously
intrigued ...and I find the role of
sexy villainess titillating ...and I
jingle when I shake.

AMY DEMONSTRATES.

BERNADETTE

Penny, I thought you were going as
Sookie from *True Blood*.

PENNY

I was going to, but she's a waitress.
It's not really dressing in costume if
you can wear the outfit on your next
double shift. So I went with Buffy
the vampire slayer.

KOOTHRAPPALI

I get it.
(to Penny)

You stake,
(to Amy)

And you shake!

THE GIRLS LAUGH. AMY SHIMMIES AND PENNY GIVES A KARATE KICK
BEFORE MOCK STAKING AN INVISIBLE VAMPIRE. THE GROUP THEN
BEGINS TO DESCEND THE STAIRS, WITH LEONARD AND PENNY BRINGING
UP THE REAR.

KOOTHRAPPALI (CONT'D)
(to Howard)

I still want tater tots.

WOLOWITZ

Fine. We'll stop at Stake and Shake.
But you get to explain the delay to
Sheldon. Expect-o Nerd Tantrum.

LEONARD
(to Penny)

You look amazing.

(MORE)

"The Convention Contingency" Script Page 6
CONTINUED:

LEONARD (CONT'D)

But if you decided against Sookie, you
always could have been my Princess
Leia.

PENNY

Leonard, it's four A.M. And I'm only
telling you this one more time. I'm
not wearing a metal bra in downtown
San Diego.

LEONARD

Fine, no couples costumes. Every
party needs a pooper.

AS THEY HEAD OUT, WE:

FADE OUT.

MAIN TITLES

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. COMIC CON LOBBY, MORNING

THE GROUP STANDS TOGETHER AMIDST A CROWD OF COMIC CON GOERS ENGAGED IN A VARIETY OF ACTIVITIES. PENNY IS HOLDING HER PHONE.

WOLOWITZ

Ladies, welcome to Nerdvana.

BERNADETTE

Wow, there are so many people.

PENNY

Guys, you really weren't...

AS SHE SPEAKS, A COSTUME NERDY MAN RUNS UP TO PENNY AND STANDS NEXT TO HER WITH A SMILE AS HIS FRIEND TAKES A PHOTO. THEY BOTH RUN OFF AS FAST AS THEY APPEARED.

PENNY (CONT'D)

...kidding. Oh, OK. What was that?

LEONARD

They think you're a booth babe.

PENNY

A booth babe?

SHELDON

A promotional model designed to drive
consumer demand for video game
products through what my mother would
call slatternly attire.

LEONARD

It means you're sexy.

PENNY

That's so sweet.

AMY

I'd better be prepared to get mobbed
by photo-hungry men, too. Any takers,
boys?

SOME NERDS PASS BY, LOOK AND KEEP ON WALKING.

KOOTHRAPALI

We'd better get going. The line for
the Star Trek movie panel is already
forming.

WOLOWITZ

Actually, Raj, Bernadette and I are
going to the vampire panel.

"The Convention Contingency" Script Page 9
CONTINUED:

KOOTHRAPPALI

But we've been looking forward to this
for months.

WOLOWITZ

Bernie's been getting me into vampire
shows lately. They put her in the
mood. Sorry.

HOWARD TURNS TO LEAVE, BUT KOOTHRAPPALI ATTEMPTS TO GRAB HIM
FROM THE BACK

KOOTHRAPPALI
(brandishing his wand)

Wait, don't leave!

WOLOWITZ

Raj, Let go!

IN THE SCUFFLE WOLOWITZ ACCIDENTALLY SNAPS KOOTHRAPPALI'S
WAND IN HALF. BOTH STAND THERE FOR AN AWKWARD MOMENT.

WOLOWITZ (CONT'D)

I'll buy you another one this
afternoon. See you later.

WOLOWITZ AND BERNADETTE EXIT, LOOKING CUTESY AND VERY MUCH
INTO ONE ANOTHER.

LEONARD

Alright, I figured we start by hitting
up a few exhibitors stands for free
swag.

(MORE)

"The Convention Contingency" Script Page 10
CONTINUED:

LEONARD (CONT'D)

Last year I fought over a light-up
Serenity key chain with a guy in a
mask who turned out to be Nathan
Fillion!

DURING HIS SPEECH, YET ANOTHER GROUP OF NERDS HAS APPROACHED
PENNY FOR PICTURES. SHE BASKS IN THE ATTENTION, POSING LIKE
A MODEL WITH THE GROUP AND IGNORING LEONARD.

PENNY
(handing Leonard her phone to
better pose for the picture)

Hey, hold this for a sec. Wait, what
were you saying?

LEONARD

Or we could go to the Dr. Horrible
Sing-Along Blog Sing-Along.

PENNY
(distracted)

Alright, alright. In a minute.

LEONARD

Penny?

HE GETS NO REACTION, THEN STORMS OFF WITH HER PHONE AS PENNY
CONTINUES TO POSE. MEANWHILE, SHELDON AND AMY ARE LOOKING AT
EVENT PROGRAMS.

AMY

What about you, Sheldon. Want to go
check out the sexy vampires?

"The Convention Contingency" Script Page 11
CONTINUED:

SHELDON

No thank you.

HE STARTS TO WALK AWAY.

AMY

Wait, where are you going?

SHELDON

I've been corresponding with a fellow
online who claims to have the original
screen used 1977 stunt lightsaber from
A New Hope, used by Alec Guinness' Obi
Wan Kenobi.

AMY

So?

SHELDON

So, I must have it.

AMY

Fine, but make it quick. Those
vampire men are hot, and mamma needs
some new mental snapshots for bath
time.

"The Convention Contingency" Script Page 12
CONTINUED:

SHELDON

Oh, you can't come with me. This seller is a bit of a Nervous Nellie for some reason. He or she said I had to come alone and speak a code word before being shown the lightsaber.

AMY

Sheldon, I came here to spend time with you and you don't appreciate me at all.

SHELDON

I see. If and when I get that prop, I am prepared to hold your hand the entire afternoon. No interlaced fingers.

AMY
(dejected)

Fine.

SHELDON

I'll text you my progress.

SHELDON LEAVES AMY BEHIND.

CUT TO:

INT. COMIC CON BOOTH ROW, LATER THAT MORNING

LEONARD SADLY STANDS BROWSING ITEMS FOR SALE. SHELDON ENTERS, LOOKING SUSPICIOUSLY AROUND AS HE CALLS OUT.

SHELDON

Womprat?

LEONARD LOOKS UP AND FOLLOWS SHELDON WITH HIS GAZE.

SHELDON (CONT'D)

Womprat?

LEONARD

Sheldon, what are you doing?

SHELDON

Shhh. I'm hunting for Womprat.

LEONARD

Some context here might help.

SHELDON

The seller of the elusive screen used lightsaber I covet goes by the online moniker "womprat." I was told to meet him here.

LEONARD

Why all the cloak and dagger? Doesn't that raise a red flag to you? What if this prop is stolen?

SHELDON

Unlikely but still undeniably worth it. Besides, who asked you, Nosy Rosie? Shouldn't you be dragging Penny off to some horrible *Babylon 5* role-playing booth?

LEONARD

She was too busy ignoring me to even notice that I left. Can I tag along with you?

SHELDON

I don't think so, Captain Tightpants.

LEONARD

Come on. Han Solo was great under pressure and familiar navigating the shady underbelly of the Empire.

SHELDON

Fine, but keep a discreet distance and set your blaster to stun. This is the Mos Eisley of the Comic Con Exhibit Hall. You will never find a more wretched hive of scum and villainy.

CONTINUED:

THEY PASS A CONFUSED HARMLESS LOOKING MAN SELLING HELLO KITTY ITEMS AS THEY EXIT.

CUT TO:

INT. COMIC CON LOBBY, MORNING

RAJ KOOTHRAPPALI AND AMY LOOK CRUSHED, IN THEIR OWN WORLDS. PENNY WAVES GOODBYE TO YET ANOTHER GROUP OF FANBOYS WHO LOOK HAPPY HAVING CAPTURED A PICTURE WITH HER.

PENNY

Ok, Leonard, what did you...

SHE SEES THAT LEONARD IS GONE.

PENNY (CONT'D)
(To Koothrappali)

Hey, did Leonard say where he was
going?

RAJ SHAKES HIS HEAD.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Great. I'll never find him without my
cell phone. He has it in his utility
belt: all the room in my purse was
taken up by emergency hand sanitizer
and Mr. Pointy.

SHE REFERENCES, PULLING OUT A WOODEN STAKE.

PENNY (CONT'D)

So, you and Howard off to the Star
Trek panel?

KOOTHRAPPALI

No, he went with Bernadette to the
"Vampires of Television" panel
instead. You're Buffy, take care of
it.

AMY

Raj, the oxytocin secreted during
orgasm creates a "chemical bonding"
that causes humans to feel
strengthened interpersonal
relationships. Howard and Bernadette
just got back from a sexy beach
getaway. If you want to regain
Howard's attention, you need to cause
him to secrete oxytocin while in your
presence... how far are you willing to
go for this friendship?

PENNY

No! Look, everyone will rejoin us
later. In the meantime, there must be
something going on that all of us can
enjoy.

THEY LOOK AT THE PROGRAM.

AMY

There's a "Psychology of the Serial
Slasher Flick" talk starting now.
That sounds riveting.

PENNY

We want to cheer Raj up, not look back
on this moment when they interview us
for an episode of *Snapped*. Oh, zombie
defense tactics is going on across the
hall!

KOOTHRAPPALI

Why don't we go to the panel for *My
Little Pony: Friendship is Magic*? We
can get the spoilers for what Pinkie
Pie will be up to next season!

PENNY AND AMY LOOK DISGUSTED.

KOOTHRAPPALI (CONT'D)

What? The show has a large following
of adult males. We call ourselves
"Bronies."

A BEAT.

"The Convention Contingency" Script Page 18
CONTINUED:

PENNY

How about we get sloshed at the bar
and photobomb those Stormtroopers?

AMY

I'm in!

KOOTHRAPALI

Perfect!

CUT TO:

INT. COMIC CON BOOTH ROW, LATER THAT MORNING

LEONARD AND SHELDON CONTINUE TO SEARCH.

LEONARD

Sheldon, we've been at this all
morning. Let's give up and go do
something fun.

SHELDON

Did Han Solo or Indiana Jones ever
give up the pursuit of artifacts or
treasure?

LEONARD

They might have if they had a wedgie
the size of this.

A CLOAKED MAN, LOOKING VERY MUCH LIKE EMPEROR PALPATINE,
COVERTLY TRIES TO GET THEIR ATTENTION.

"The Convention Contingency" Script Page 19
CONTINUED:

MASKED MAN

You the one looking for the
lightsaber? Follow me.

SHELDON
(excitedly, to Leonard)

Fortune and glory, kid. Fortune and
glory.

LEONARD

I've got a bad feeling about this.

CUT TO:

INT. COMIC CON BAR, LATER THAT DAY

PENNY, AMY AND KOOTHRAPPALI SIT AT A TABLE WITH DRINKS IN
HAND, CLEARLY TIPSY. A MORBIDLY OBESE BATMAN IN A UNITARD
WALKS BY, AND THE THREE GIGGLE.

AMY

You know who's sexy in costume?
Sheldon. His little tush is Bat-
tastic. But all he cares about is
that stupid screen-used lightsaber.

PENNY

You want to light up Sheldon's saber!

AMY
(happy and drunk)

And I once attempted to be used
onscreen...

(MORE)

"The Convention Contingency" Script Page 20
CONTINUED:

AMY (CONT'D)

but as soon as I started unbuttoning
my cardigan, Sheldon abruptly ended
our Skype chat.

KOOTHRAPPALI

At least you two have someone. I'm
just a single loser with a broken
wand.

AMY

You could do sci fi speed dating.
Look.

AMY POINTS TO A SIGN FOR THE EVENT.

PENNY

Yeah! You can meet someone with
similar interests.

AMY

Just don't mention the ponies.

KOOTHRAPPALI

You want me to speak to dozens of
women? How many mini bottles do you
think fit in this robe?

"The Convention Contingency" Script Page 21
CONTINUED:

PENNY

Sweetie, you just have to relax.
We'll come with you for support.

KOOTHRAPPALI

Well, companionship would be nice.
It's been quite some time since I...
put my elder wand into someone's
chamber of secrets.

CUT TO:

INT. DARKENED COMIC CON BOOTH, LATER THAT DAY

THE BOOTH LOOKS SINISTER. SEVERAL UNSAVORY LOOKING MEN
LINGER IN CORNERS, EYEING LEONARD AND SHELDON AS THEY
APPROACH BEHIND THE MASKED MAN

LEONARD

This whole thing smells fishy to me.

SHELDON

Get in there. I don't care what you
smell!

THE MASKED MAN BECKONS THEM FORWARD, HOLDING A BLACK CASE.

MASKED MAN

Are you ready to be blown away?

SHELDON

Nothing shocks me. I'm a scientist.

"The Convention Contingency" Script Page 22
CONTINUED:

MASKED MAN
(opening the case to reveal
the lightsaber)

Here it is. An elegant weapon for a
more civilized age.

SHELDON
You mean the seventies?

LEONARD
Just a minute. How do we know it's
for real?

MASKED MAN
Oh, it's real.

LEONARD
(cocky, channeling Han Solo
himself)
Then you'd better cough up a
certificate of authenticity, or we're
not interested.

MASKED MAN
Fine, have it your way. And I was
going to throw in Carrie Fisher's Diet
Coke can for free.

HE STARTS TO PUT THE LIGHTSABER AWAY.

SHELDON
No, wait! I'll take it.

"The Convention Contingency" Script Page 23
CONTINUED:

THEY MAKE THE TRANSACTION. LEONARD SHAKES HIS HEAD.

END OF ACT ONE.

ACT TWO

INT. COMIC CON LOBBY, OUTSIDE SPEED DATING ROOM, LATER THAT DAY.

KOOTHRAPPALI, PENNY AND AMY STAND OUTSIDE A DOOR MARKED "SCI-FI SPEED DATING." THEY DELIBERATE GOING INSIDE.

AMY

Are we really going to do this?

KOOTHRAPPALI

Why not? What do I have to lose?

PENNY

Yeah, I mean, what's the worst that
could happen?

INT. SPEED DATING ROOM, LATER THAT DAY

"SCI-FI SPEED DATING" SIGNS ARE STREWN ACROSS THE ROOM.
PENNY SITS ACROSS FROM A STRANGER.

STRANGE MAN

Are you into role-playing? Cards?

Online? In the bedroom?

CUT TO:

INT. SPEED DATING ROOM, CONTINUOUS

AMY EXTENDS HER PHONE TO A MAN AS IF TO SHOW HIM A PICTURE.
HE APPEARS TERRIFIED.

"The Convention Contingency" Script Page 25
CONTINUED:

AMY

And that's what a malignant brain
tumor looks like.

CUT TO:

INT. SPEED DATING ROOM, CONTINUOUS

RAJ SMILES AT A WOMAN WHO IS CLEARLY NOT INTERESTED.

KOOTHRAPPALI

And then Pinkie Pie saves the other
ponies. She's such a free spirit, you
know?

CUT TO:

INT. SPEED DATING ROOM, CONTINUOUS

PENNY ATTEMPTS TO MAKE PLEASANT CONVERSATION WITH A SHY MAN.

PENNY

You may have seen my work. I recently
did a national commercial.

SHY MAN

For what?

PENNY

Oh, uh, rose-scented Preparation H for
women.

"The Convention Contingency" Script Page 26
CONTINUED:

SHY MAN

My mom loves that stuff. Maybe later
you can autograph a tube of it for me.

CUT TO:

INT. SPEED DATING ROOM, CONTINUOUS

AMY SITS ACROSS FROM A MAN IN AN ILL-FITTING WOLVERINE
COSTUME.

WOLVERINE

I know what you're wondering, and yes.
That bone is also made of Adamantium.

CUT TO:

INT. SPEED DATING ROOM, CONTINUOUS

RAJ KOOTHRAPPALI SITS ACROSS FROM A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN IN A
SIMPLE MASK.

KOOTHRAPPALI

I was going to go to the "Women of Sci-
fi" panel earlier, but my best friend
Howard ditched me and I didn't feel
like going without him.

MASKED WOMAN

Well that's too bad. I think you
would have really enjoyed it.

KOOTHRAPPALI

You went to that panel?

"The Convention Contingency" Script Page 27
CONTINUED:

MASKED WOMAN
(leaning in)

I was on that panel.

CUT TO:

INT. SPEED DATING ROOM, LATER THAT DAY

AMY SITS ACROSS FROM A CUTE GUY WEARING GLASSES SIMILAR TO
AMY'S.

AMY

My knowledge of comics is limited.
Shopping and clubbing with my best
friends keeps me pretty busy.

GLASSES GUY

That makes your costume even more
impressive. You look really cute.

AMY

That's exceedingly kind of you.

GLASSES GUY

I mean it. Can we get some dinner
tonight?

CUT TO:

INT. SPEED DATING ROOM, CONTINUOUS

A MAN SITS SPEAKING ENTIRELY IN WOOKIE TO A DAZED PENNY.
WITHOUT A WORD, SHE GETS UP AND EXITS.

CUT TO:

INT. COMIC CON LOBBY, SHORTLY AFTER

LEONARD

I still can't understand why you would buy that thing knowing it could be a fake.

SHELDON

It's real. I can just feel it. Since I first saw A New Hope as a little boy, I have dreamed of having this one item. And now, here it is. The culmination of all those years of searching.

LEONARD SNAPS A PICTURE OF THE LIGHTSABER WITH HIS PHOTO CAMERA AND PROCEEDS TO CLICK BUTTONS.

LEONARD

I'm sending a picture to Stuart. He can tell us for sure if it's real.

SHELDON

Leonard, the man pinkie-swore me. That's a binding contract amongst gentlemen.

LEONARD GETS A QUICK TEXT BACK.

"The Convention Contingency" Script Page 29
CONTINUED:

LEONARD

Oh, Sheldon. I'm sorry. Stuart says
that there are too many bands on the
base. It's a nineties reproduction.
A fake.

SHELDON

What?

LEONARD

He also says that the Diet Coke can is
one of those modern novelty
throwbacks.

SHELDON

You mean to tell me I am not in
possession of Princess Leia's DNA?

PENNY'S SQUEAK OF PROTEST CAN BE HEARD OFF-CAMERA. BOTH MEN
LOOK OVER.

CUT TO:

INT. COMIC CON LOBBY, OUTSIDE SPEED DATING ROOM, CONTINUOUS

PENNY CAN BE SEEN RESISTING ANOTHER GROUP OF PICTURE-SEEKING
GEEKS. SHELDON AND LEONARD APPROACH.

PENNY

Guys, I appreciate it but I'm really
not in the mood.

CONTINUED:

SHE CONTINUES TO BE HASSLED. ONE MAN PUTS HIS ARM AROUND PENNY AND SHE TRIES TO SHRUG HIM OFF. THIS ENRAGES LEONARD, WHO STRIDES FORCEFULLY UP TO THE PERSISTENT NERD.

LEONARD

Get your hand off my girlfriend.

PERSISTENT NERD

Your girlfriend? Yeah, right.

LEONARD PUSHES THE MAN AWAY FROM PENNY, AND THE MAN FALLS TO THE FLOOR.

LEONARD

I said, leave her alone!

PENNY LOOKS ON IN ADMIRATION AS TWO SECURITY OFFICERS APPROACH.

OFFICER

I'm afraid you're going to have to
come with us.

CUT TO:

INT. COMIC CON LOBBY ESCALATOR, CONTINUOUS.

LEONARD IS CUFFED WITH HIS HANDS BEHIND HIS BACK. THE OFFICERS LEAD HIM TO THE ESCALATOR AND HE STEPS ON, AS PENNY WATCHES FROM THE TOP LEVEL.

PENNY

(shouting to Leonard)

I love you.

"The Convention Contingency" Script Page 31
CONTINUED:

LEONARD
(descending the escalator)

I know.

CUT TO:

INT. SPEED DATING ROOM, SIMULTANEOUSLY

KOOTHRAPPALI CONTINUES TO TALK TO THE PRETTY MASKED WOMAN

KOOTHRAPPALI

You were on the "Women of Sci-fi"
panel?

THE WOMAN REMOVES HER MASK. IT'S ZOE SALDANA.

KOOTHRAPPALI (CONT'D)

Oh my god. Zoe Saldana? I've been
talking to the star of Star Trek and
Avatar this whole time? You probably
can't wait to get out of here.

ZOE SALDANA

Actually, dressing up and doing this
lets me meet people. Guys are less
intimidated when they don't know who I
am. Look, you're cute. And really
smart.

SHE WRITES DOWN HER NUMBER AND HANDS IT TO HIM.

"The Convention Contingency" Script Page 32
CONTINUED:

ZOE SALDANA (CONT'D)

You should call me.

CUT TO:

INT. COMIC CON LOBBY, EVENING

LEONARD AND PENNY STAND WITH WOLOWITZ, BERNADETTE AND
SHELDON.

BERNADETTE

They arrested you?

LEONARD

Kind of. But they let me go when

Penny explained what happened.

SHELDON DEJECTEDLY HOLDS HIS FAKE LIGHTSABER AND COKE CAN.

BERNADETTE
(to Sheldon)

You alright?

SHELDON

Fakes. Why did they have to be fakes?

KOOTHRAPPALI AND AMY ENTER FROM THE SPEED DATING ROOM.
KOOTHRAPPALI REJOINS THE MAIN GROUP. SHELDON BREAKS AWAY
FROM THE GROUP AND APPROACHES AMY TO ONE SIDE.

SHELDON (CONT'D)
(to Amy)

Oh, you wouldn't believe what I've
been through.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

SHELDON (CONT'D)

My prop turned out to be a cheap reproduction, and by the time I convinced event security to investigate, the seller had disappeared. Turns out he wasn't even an authorized dealer. All that will console me now is a bacon cheeseburger with bacon and cheese on the side.

AMY

I'm sorry, Sheldon. I can't. I have a dinner date.

WOLOWITZ

(to Raj)

Look, I'm really sorry about what happened earlier. Look, I got you this.

HE HANDS A BAG TO RAJ, WHO UNWRAPS IT TO REVEAL A NEW WAND.

WOLOWITZ (CONT'D)

It's the deluxe edition. Do you forgive me?

KOOTHRAPPALI

Sure. I forgive you.

WOLOWITZ

What do you say we check out that *My Little Pony* exhibit tomorrow? Just the two of us?

KOOTHRAPPALI

Thanks, but I've already made plans to go with a girl I met during speed dating.

ZOE SALDANA ENTERS FROM THE SPEED DATING ROOM AND IS MOBBED BY AUTOGRAPH SEEKERS. AS SHE SIGNS ONE, SHE SMILES AND WAVES FLIRTILY TO RAJ ACROSS THE ROOM. HOWARD IS STUNNED INTO SILENCE.

LEONARD

Wow. *She's* not afraid to be seen cavorting with a common geek.

PENNY

What are you talking about?

LEONARD

This morning... you were getting all this attention and spaced me out... and you wouldn't do a couples costume. Are you ashamed of me?

"The Convention Contingency" Script Page 35
CONTINUED:

PENNY

No way! I am proud that you're my
boyfriend. And tell you what, next
year we'll go as Han and Leia.

LEONARD

Really? You'll look so sexy.

PENNY

So will you... just bring some baby
powder.

LEONARD LOOKS AT HER, CONFUSED.

PENNY (CONT'D)

I wouldn't want your skin to chafe in
that metal bikini.

END OF ACT TWO.

ACT THREE

INT. COMIC CON BOOTH ROW, THE NEXT DAY

HOWARD AND BERNADETTE REMAIN COSTUMED AS MARIO AND PRINCESS PEACH. THEY WALK THE COMIC CON FLOOR.

BERNADETTE

I've gotta hand it to you, Howie. Our costumes turned out great.

WOLOWITZ

I told you. All that sewing practice letting my mom's pants out really paid off.

BERNADETTE

I was worried you were going to suggest that I dress as some objectified comic book heroine with her boobs out.

WOLOWITZ

Mario and Peach are a classic love story. I tell you, if I had to pick our wedding theme all over again...

AS HE STROLLS BY, A MAN DRESSED UP AS DR. HORRIBLE ENTERS AND BUMPS INTO THE COUPLE.

"The Convention Contingency" Script Page 37
CONTINUED:

DR. HORRIBLE

Wow, sorry, these goggles obscure my
vision.

BERNADETTE

It's alright.

WOLOWITZ

No harm done.

BERNADETTE AND WOLOWITZ BEGIN TO WALK AWAY.

WOLOWITZ (CONT'D)
(quietly to Bernadette)

His costume isn't half bad, but his
stitches are horrible.

DR. HORRIBLE HAS OVERHEARD. HE PULLS OFF HIS GOGGLES,
REVEALING HIMSELF TO BE NEIL PATRICK HARRIS. HE LOOKS AFTER
THEM AS BERNADETTE AND WOLOWITZ EXIT.

NEIL PATRICK HARRIS

My stitches are perfect!

Appendix B:
Spec Script for *Bones*

Bones

"The Winner Who Lost"

A spec script by

Kacie Henderson

UNIVERSITY OF DENVER
Master's Thesis Spec
MFJS Department

Bones

"The Winner Who Lost"

CAST

DR. TEMPERANCE "BONES" BRENNAN.....EMILY DESCHANEL
SPECIAL AGENT SEELEY BOOTH.....DAVID BOREANAZ
ANGELA MONTENEGRO.....MICHAELA CONLIN
DR. JACK HODGINS.....T. J. THYNE
DR. CAMILLE SAROYAN.....TAMARA TAYLOR
DR. LANCE SWEETS.....JOHN FRANCIS DALEY
MAX BRENNAN.....RYAN O'NEAL
DAISY WICK.....CARLA GALLO
CHRISTINE ANGELA BOOTH.....SUSANNE ALLAN HARTMAN

GUEST CAST

IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

MALE INSURANCE AGENT.....TBD
FEMALE INSURANCE AGENT.....TBD
DETECTIVE LONNIE JAMES.....TBD
TAY MARLOW.....TBD
CANDICE CAVALLUZZI.....TBD
AMY CAVALLUZZI.....TBD

Bones: The Winner Who Lost

TEASER

EXT. BACKYARD- MORNING-- TWO YEARS AGO

A caption reading "Two Years Ago" flashes as an two INSURANCE AGENTS tread onto soft grass in a suburban backyard.

MALE AGENT
Wow, this is a huge one.

FEMALE AGENT
Must have been the storms last month.

MALE AGENT
Yeah. Look at the size of that thing!

The camera reveals a huge hole in the ground, sand slowly funneling away.

FEMALE AGENT
What is that?

MALE AGENT
Sprinkler line.

FEMALE AGENT
(pointing)
No. That thing. Right there.

More sand gives way, revealing a grisly severed hand. The two scream and retreat.

INT. JEFFERSONIAN MEDICO-LEGAL LAB/ BRENNAN'S OFFICE -
MORNING -- TWO YEARS AGO

BRENNAN wakes up on her office sofa, beautiful yet mussed. She stretches, wincing and touching the small of her back.

CUT TO:

INT. JEFFERSONIAN MEDICO-LEGAL LAB HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Brennan exits the decontamination shower room, dressed and combing her wet hair with her hands. She plods groggily back towards her office, quickening her step as she sees ANGELA sitting in her office.

CUT TO:

INT. JEFFERSONIAN MEDICO-LEGAL LAB/ BRENNAN'S OFFICE -
CONTINUOUS

Brennan reaches her desk and turns,

BRENNAN
Hi, Angela.

ANGELA
You stood me up.

BRENNAN
Angela...

ANGELA
(cutting her off)
Last night you said, and I quote,
"I'll just be another hour. Then
I'll meet you at the Founding
Fathers."

BRENNAN
I said I would try to make it.
Identifying that last set of
remains from limbo took longer than
I thought.

ANGELA
You were toiling away all night
over some old bones instead of with
a hot-blooded man? That's
downright shameful.

CONTINUED:

BRENNAN

I spent years wondering where my mother had gone and her remains were here, under a catalogue number. In the wreckage of human remains I don't just see how these people died anymore. I see the potential for who they left behind.

ANGELA

OK sweetie, now I feel totally selfish, though last night when I got home... dejected... Hodgins was reading conspiracy theories to Michael for his bedtime story.

BRENNAN

I'm sorry, Angela. I'll make it up to you.

ANGELA

(rising)
Ok sweetie. You'd better.

Angela exits. Brennan moves to set down her cell phone and winces again. Touching her back, she carefully bends over from the waist as if to touch her toes. BOOTH enters the doorway and whistles, as her posterior is directly facing him.

BOOTH

Wow Bones, good morning to you too.

BRENNAN

It will be a good morning once I alleviate this localized throbbing.

A beat.

BOOTH

I thought I was the one with back problems.

CONTINUED:

BRENNAN

The lack of support in the couch cushions must have left me sleeping at an odd angle. The lumbosacral region of my back hurts. Perhaps I should get a fold-out for my office.

Booth takes a small package out of a fast food bag, waving it around as he responds.

BOOTH

Or maybe, Bones, you should sleep in your own bed. At home. Away from this place.

(taking a bite of his
mystery breakfast and
savoring it)

Ya know, I'm surprised you squints haven't developed your own language and currency by now, that's how much time all of you spend here.

BRENNAN

That thing smells. What is it?

BOOTH

Folded apples.

BRENNAN

I don't know what that means. How do you fold a spherical fruit?

BOOTH

(scrambling in the bag for
another, which he offers
to her forcefully)

Fine. Portable pie, it's portable pie. Now will you please just take it and come with me? We have a case.

CONTINUED:

Brennan wrinkles her nose and tentatively takes the greasy wax paper in her fingers, studying it as if it were wreckage at a crime scene.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

They didn't have any tofu breakfast wraps or organic granola, or whatever. Just try it. Oh, we might be away for a little while. Do we need to stop by your place for a change of clothes?

BRENNAN

Thanks to my frequent overnight stays in the lab lately, I've begun keeping essentials here. Let me pick something out.

BOOTH

Just grab the whole lot of it, Bones, we've gotta go.

CUT TO:

INT. RUNDOWN MOTEL - EVENING -- PRESENT DAY

Caption reads "Present Day." From her surroundings and altered hairstyle it is clear that Brennan is still on the run after last year's finale. She sits holding her infant daughter CHRISTINE as her father MAX unpacks fast food from paper bags.

MAX

It may not be great, but it's warm. Let me hold her. You go ahead and eat.

Brennan hands over the child and begins to pick at some fries.

BRENNAN

Have you given any more thought to my proposal?

CONTINUED:

MAX

Honey, I meant what I said this morning. You can't call Booth. Me contacting Angela is dangerous enough.

BRENNAN

But you're the one who suggested we keep in contact.

MAX

To know if they've been able to prove that Pelant framed you. The guy's a computer whiz who figured out how to insert your image onto surveillance footage. Do you really think he can't track down phone records and figure out where you are?

BRENNAN

I'll get a new burner phone.

MAX

(shaking his head)

Sorry, kiddo. It's just not safe. You're a fugitive now. Besides, if the FBI finds out that Booth's been in contact with you, he'll be toast.

BRENNAN

I know. But not communicating with him... what if Booth thinks I deserted him, that I don't love him? What if he doesn't forgive me?

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. SWEET'S OFFICE - DAY -- PRESENT DAY

A grumpy Booth sits in a therapy session with DR. SWEETS, who stares at him patiently.

SWEETS

Booth, you need to talk about Dr. Brennan.

BOOTH

I'll tell you what I've told everyone else. I don't know where Bones is, OK?

SWEETS

I mean you need to talk about what you're feeling with her gone. She took your baby and disappeared. That's extremely traumatic.

BOOTH

She did what she had to. If Bones had turned herself in, Pelant would've been able to work his computer magic and make sure she was convicted of murder.

SWEETS

You believe that she was framed?

BOOTH

(seething)

I know she was framed, and cut the crap because so do you!

SWEETS

Rationally, you believe she acted in her best interest. But you're still upset.

CONTINUED:

BOOTH

I love her and she didn't trust me
enough to tell me her plan. I
don't want to lose her again!

SWEETS

Again?

BOOTH

It was right before Vincent Nigel-
Murray died...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BOOTH'S VEHICLE/TRAVELING - DAY -- TWO YEARS AGO

The weather outside is dark and rainy. As Booth drives he
pulls yet another pie from the fast food bag and begins to
devour it.

BRENNAN

How many of those things did you
get?

BOOTH

Oh I don't know... eight. Apple's
my favorite.

BRENNAN

Elevated blood sugar levels can
lead to long-term hyperglycemia and
eventually, diabetes. Besides
weight gain, if you keep this up
you could experience kidney
distress, vision problems and nerve
damage. It could affect our
partnership.

BOOTH

I'm insulted! You won't want to be
my partner if I gain a little
pudge?

CONTINUED:

BRENNAN

No, I just think it's increasingly difficult to aim a gun at a suspect if you can't feel the weapon in your hand, can't see the target and have to urinate constantly. I really should carry a gun since your faculties may be impaired at this very moment.

BOOTH

Nice try, Bones. But the answer is the same as always. No gun. And I can see and aim just fine, thank you. I went to the range yesterday and I'm as accurate as always.

BRENNAN

Well are you experiencing frequent urination?

BOOTH

Bones, please. Let a man eat his pie in peace.

A moment of disgruntled silence passes between them.

BRENNAN

(changing the subject)

I find the percussion of the rain coupled with the monotonous sound of the windshield wipers quite mollifying. This must be the way a fetus sleeps in the womb, surrounded by the constant drumming of its mother's heartbeat. Routine creating a sense of safety.

She yawns.

CONTINUED:

BRENNAN (CONT'D)
Rush hour ended an hour ago. Where
are we going that still has this
much traffic?

BOOTH
Uh, the airport.

BRENNAN
Was someone murdered at Washington
Dulles? Is this a terrorism
investigation?

BOOTH
No, nothing like that.

BRENNAN
Then what? I should be prepared for
our assignment and you haven't told
me a thing.

BOOTH
I'll fill you in on the flight.
Driving would have taken too long.

BRENNAN
Too long to go where, Booth?

BOOTH
Tampa, Bones. We're going to
Florida!

CUT TO:

EXT. TAMPA SUBURBAN STREET - DAY -- TWO YEARS AGO

Booth's rental car parks on a lush manicured street of upper middle class houses. CURIOUS MEN in golf shirts and children riding bikes are kept at bay by local cops. LACQUER-HAIRED MEN and PENCIL-SKIRTED WOMEN carrying microphones prepare for broadcast on the perimeter of a collapsing residence. Brennan exits the car, slamming the door behind her. Booth quickly follows up the front drive.

CONTINUED:

BOOTH

Oh, come on, Bones. I thought it would be a nice surprise- enjoying some sun while working a case. We can even hit up one of the theme parks while we're here.

BRENNAN

The costumed characters are unpleasant. You of all people should know that. You're afraid of clowns.

BOOTH

A lovable furry mouse is nothing like a clown.

BRENNAN

Costumed characters are just one step away from clowns: they serve the same purpose for the same target audience. If anything, mice are more fearsome than clowns. They carry rabies and plague. I just want to work the case and go home.

BOOTH

OK, fine, no theme park. Maybe the beach then.

BRENNAN

Booth, you didn't feel it necessary to tell me that we were going to be working a case in another state. It never occurred to you that I have a life outside of work? That there are things I would need to organize before an absence?

BOOTH

Well...

CONTINUED:

BRENNAN

(cutting him off)

You must think I'm some sort of pathetic hermit who has no social life. I'll have you know I'm very well-rounded.

His eyes wander over her body in an attempt of a joke.

BRENNAN (CONT'D)

Booth!

BOOTH

It was wrong of me to not tell you we were coming here. I'm sure you had a ton of things to rearrange and I gave you no warning. It was inconsiderate. I'm sorry.

BRENNAN

I was forced to cancel my karate lessons. And Angela has to feed my fish.

BOOTH

I didn't realize you had pets, Bones.

BRENNAN

Not pets. Pet. Singular. Last week I purchased a moor goldfish. I named it Othello.

She looks at him expectantly, waiting for him to laugh at her cleverness. He just stares at her. Her confidence falters.

BRENNAN (CONT'D)

After Shakespeare's tragic character, the humor being that Othello was a Moorish general in the Venetian army who was a black man.

CONTINUED:

Booth clearly doesn't think she's funny, but he tries to appease her with a laugh. Brennan isn't satisfied.

BRENNAN (CONT'D)

Sweets says that I can improve on showing empathy and forging emotional bonds through caring for pets.

BOOTH

Yeah, but you can't take a goldfish for a walk. It's not something you can snuggle up with after a rough day.

BRENNAN

Oh. It's just that after that case at the aquarium I have a new fondness for fish. Did I do it wrong? Should I have purchased a cat? I am rather fond of Othello. The way his eyes bulge, I believe he is relieved whenever he sees me. Although it is true, I cannot snuggle with him.

BOOTH

Ah, I guess you'll just have to cuddle me, then.

BRENNAN

Not funny. I'm still mad at you.

Local cop LONNIE JAMES, wearing khaki shorts and a Tampa Bay PD. windbreaker, approaches them.

LONNIE JAMES

Agent Booth? Dr. Brennan? I'm Lonnie James. Glad you're finally here. This is a time-sensitive case.

Brennan watches an FBI TECH carefully tread closer to the home as if she were on thin ice.

CONTINUED:

BRENNAN

What happened here?

LONNIE JAMES

Sinkhole. The place had some previous damage. Sinking, cracked tile, some plumbing issues. But last night the ground just gave way and as you can see, the house has begun sinking into the void.

He leads the way to the backyard and they follow.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

BOOTH

I thought you guys had sinkhole issues down here all the time.

LONNIE JAMES

Yeah, but not like this. The insurance company's rep arrived this morning to see the damage and saw a hand poking out of the sand. This house is still sinking, and fast. We need someone like you to retrieve the body without damaging evidence. We need to know if this was murder or just a weird accident.

Booth glances at the news crews towards the street, in various states of preparation and shooting.

BOOTH

What's with all the media attention already?

LONNIE JAMES

Sinkholes alone are enough to bring a news crew, if they're big enough. But a murder too?

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

LONNIE JAMES (CONT'D)

Those reporters have caught scent
of something big, like piranhas
sniffing out a chubby tourist's leg
in the water. I'll never make my
tee time now.

As they speak the house gradually tips even further, and sand
slowly giving way beneath it, as if sifted through a giant
funnel.

BRENNAN

We won't retrieve those remains if
we don't act now. I need your team
to get a firefighter's harness and
a gurney rigged. I'll gather what
evidence I can.

Lonnie waves over the FBI tech, who approaches with some
gear.

BOOTH

No way, Bones, That thing could
suck you in. We'll wait for the
assessment from the geologists to
see if it's safe or not.

Brennan begins donning her harness.

BRENNAN

There's not enough time..

Booth grabs the other harness and glares at her.

BOOTH

Fine. I'll help you. If you died
Othello would be heartbroken.

CUT TO:

EXT. SINKHOLE VOID - MOMENTS LATER

They slide over the side and Booth lurches away from the side
of the hole.

CONTINUED:

BOOTH

Holy!

(censoring himself)

Think you can help me out here?

Booth is face to face with a dead man's open, opaque eyes, He strains against his climbing cable, trying to back away. Brennan hoists herself around to his other side, putting herself between her partner and the corpse but keeping one hand on his shoulder.

CUT TO:

INT. JEFFERSONIAN MEDICO-LEGAL LAB/ ANGELA'S AREA -- TWO YEARS AGO

DR. CAMILLE SAROYAN, DR. JACK HODGINS and Angela Montenegro are gathered looking intently at photos of the body while Brennan can be seen on video conference monitor under a tent at the crime scene, cleaning her implements and returning them to her bag.

CAMILLE

So, how is Florida?

BRENNAN

Humid, lots of tourists. I packaged the remains quickly upon retrieval from the sinkhole, but the humidity might have already compromised the soft tissues.

CAMILLE

You're worried about the tissue on this one? That's not like you, Dr. Brennan. Usually you can't wait for me to give you the OK to remove the flesh and begin your own examination.

BRENNAN

True, but this time I think there may be valuable information in the soft tissues.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

BRENNAN (CONT'D)

As you can see from the photos I sent you, our victim is an African-American male. Advanced fusion of the sacrum suggests mid-to-late thirties. He had apparent muscle definition but he was found in a sinkhole. Very unusual.

ANGELA

Sinkhole? Like all those scenes in movies where the hero narrowly survives by hoisting himself out using a rope or his trusty whip?

HODGINS

(with a grin)

You're thinking of quicksand, which is a mixture of sediments, salts and sometimes water. It appears to be a solid, but when a person steps on it the granules separate. Then the decrease in viscosity causes the victim to sink. Sinkholes are different. With a sinkhole, there is no pit full of fine sediment and water. There is just a void underground, like hidden pockets of air beneath the crust of a loaf of bread. Too much movement within the ground, or weight on top of it, and that fine "crust" can dip, crack, or simply cave in. The process can happen quickly, but most sinkholes, including the one this guy was found in, have slow movement. He should have been able to crawl out with no problem, especially in the beginning stages before the void completely gave way.

CONTINUED:

CAMILLE

So our victim either died before being dumped in the sinkhole, or something prevented him from saving himself.

BRENNAN

The victim's age and muscle tone indicate that he should have been strong enough to hoist himself out of the sand, if he fell in accidentally.

ANGELA

Unless he was weakened by something, or was knocked unconscious. There was a case in Colorado- a young woman died in the Great Sand Dunes National Park after getting drunk and passing out face-down in the sand.

BRENNAN

Note the mild trauma to the right parietal. It wouldn't have been fatal. But it could indicate either that he fell or that someone attempted to bludgeon him. Your priority is identification, and finding out if the victim died before or after entering the sinkhole. Angela, the victim's cell phone was in his pocket. It's wet and full of sand but I'm hoping you'll be able to retrieve some information.

ANGELA

I'll take apart the pieces when they arrive and see what I can recover.

CONTINUED:

BRENNAN

From what I could ascertain here, the victim's teeth showed no fillings, crowns or cosmetic veneers, so getting ID from dental records is unlikely. These teeth are also congruent with individuals who experience malnutrition.

ANGELA

Well I can begin a facial reconstruction now based on the photos you sent.

BRENNAN

Good. Cross-reference with missing persons in the Tampa Bay Area. Pay special attention to those in low-income areas.

They sign off.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN BACKYARD CRIME SCENE - CONTINUOUS

CANDICE CAVALLUZZI, a stout middle-aged woman wearing travel knit, strides purposefully past Brennan. Lonnie spots her and chases after.

LONNIE JAMES

Wait a minute, ma'am. Everyone without clearance needs to stay on that side of the yellow tape.

The woman turns to him: lots of eye makeup, bright red lips, gleaming jewelry everywhere. A Maltese pops its head out of her purse suddenly, as if Lonnie's shout had woken it.

CANDICE

I do have clearance. I have power of attorney over this property!

She keeps walking away, answering her phone when IT RINGS.

CONTINUED:

CANDICE (CONT'D)
I'm busy right now. No! Amy, I'm
busy. I can't talk to you when
you're like this. Goodbye!

Candice reaches the side of the sinkhole and plants herself
near Booth while his back is turned, talking to a local cop.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
What happened? What did you find?

Booth turns to meet her, nose to nose. He's clearly startled
but recovers his composure in an instant.

BOOTH
I've had enough faces popping out
at me from nowhere. Lonnie, care
to tell me why this lady is
interrogating me?

LONNIE JAMES
Sorry, she's faster than she looks.

BOOTH
Ma'am I'm going to have to ask you
to step back. This is a dangerous
area.

CANDICE
I know. I'm Candice Cavalluzzi,
Public Adjuster to the Burnham
family. This is their vacation
home. They reside in Vancouver and
have signed durable power of
attorney paperwork so that I can
handle the sinkhole repairs in
their absence. Everyone needs to
get off their property now!

BOOTH
Excuse me?

CONTINUED:

CANDICE

The Burnhams have a sinkhole claim in with their insurance company. It's my job to make sure they get the biggest settlement possible. What happens if an insurance agent slips in during all this mess, sees the widened sinkhole and claims that some of this damage was due to your interference? I could be out my commission!

LONNIE JAMES

Alright, by now I should be on the third green just past the first water feature, but instead I'm here on my day off. (To Candice) You want to fight, fine. But do it somewhere else. We have a room open at the station, and everyone can hash things out there tomorrow. Since Dr. Brennan's done for now, I'm going to try and make up my eighteen holes.

BRENNAN

The police can set up a secure perimeter. No one will get through, Ms. Cavalluzzi. I need the crime scene preserved as much as possible, just like you.

CANDICE

Crime scene?

BOOTH

Possible murder. An investigation that you are currently interfering with.

CANDICE

I thought everyone was just out here gawking at the sinkhole. I'll cooperate as much as I can.

CONTINUED:

Candice hands Booth her card and retreats to her Cadillac, her small dog yapping and the PHONE RINGING all the way.

BOOTH

(to Lonnie)

Now I have to spend more time with her. If your putter was here I'd beat you with it.

BRENNAN

She may have information we need... Did you see the way she extended her mandible when she spoke? You do the exact same thing. It's eerie.

CUT TO:

INT. JEFFERSONIAN MEDICO-LEGAL LAB/ PLATFORM - THE NEXT DAY -- TWO YEARS AGO

Camille performs exploratory evaluations of the remains as Hodgins walks up the stairs with a clipboard. A RING is heard over the computer monitor. Cam answers and Brennan appears in video conference.

CUT TO:

INT. BOOTH'S VEHICLE/TRAVELING - CONTINUOUS

Brennan is sitting in the passenger side of Booth's car as he drives with a tablet in her lap.

BRENNAN

Did the remains arrive intact? I also sent several vials of soil but the void was growing so rapidly that the samples may not yield helpful results.

INTERCUT CONCURRENT SCENES AS NECESSARY

In the Lab Hodgins reaches the autopsy table, practically glowing. Angela follows closely behind. He hands the clipboard to Camille and starts in.

CONTINUED:

HODGINS

Everything got here this morning.
Don't worry. If those babies
contain unusual particulates, I'll
know. In the meantime I found
something really interesting on the
victim's shoe.

BRENNAN

Did you establish ID?

ANGELA

(cutting Hodgins off)
Hey, sweetie, it's me. Yes. I
cross-referenced my sketch with
lower income missing persons, like
you suggested. Nothing came up.

HODGINS

(cutting Angela off right
back)
But, as I was saying, I found
evidence of chrysom-phalus aonidum
on the victim's shoe. They're
Florida red scales, little guys
that feed on the leaves of orchids.

ANGELA

And since orchids are usually
expensive, I broadened my search to
include higher income areas of
Tampa Bay. And guess what? Our
victim is Edwin Marlow. He lived in
a 2 million dollar home in the
suburbs.

BRENNAN

But what about the malnutrition
evident on the teeth? Why would
such a wealthy person starve
himself and avoid the dentist?

CONTINUED:

ANGELA

Marlow was very poor until the age of 37. Then last year he won 46 million dollars in the state lottery.

HODGINS

Blowfly larvae indicate that the victim died approximately 3-4 days ago. Now you can ask suspects for an alibi.

As he concludes Hodgins excitedly leaves, dragging Angela with him. He practically skips back to his workspace.

BRENNAN

Was Dr. Hodgins' reaction unusual, or am I misinterpreting?

CAMILLE

You've given him enough dirt to keep him busy for days.

BRENNAN

So he's angry? But he looked so... buoyant.

CAMILLE

This is like the holy grail of particulates for Dr. Hodgins. Christmas come early. When you fly back, he'll probably hug you.

BRENNAN

That will not be necessary. Booth and I are questioning someone this afternoon, so any additional facts we obtain before then would be helpful.

CAMILLE

Well there's a deep laceration to the base of the neck.

CONTINUED:

Camille turns her attention to the lungs and makes a quick incision. Her face falls.

BRENNAN

What is it, Dr. Saroyan?

CAMILLE

The alveolar sacks and bronchial passage are littered with sand. I'll have Hodgins compare the sediments in the lungs to the sample vials you sent. I'm betting that they match.

BRENNAN

This most likely rules out the possibility that Marlow was dead before being dumped in the sinkhole.

CAMILLE

The state of the lungs and presence of burst blood vessels in the eyes suggest cause of death to be sand aspiration and asphyxiation, not the blow to the back of the neck. Our victim had an excruciating death.

BRENNAN

Now we should determine if our victim had any toxins in his system, if he had any congenital disorders or if that neck injury affected strength or range of movement necessary to get out of the sinkhole.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. MURDER VICTIM'S PORCH - DAY -- TWO YEARS AGO

Booth knocks on the door of a palatial home while Brennan examines her phone.

BRENNAN

Hodgins confirmed that the particulates in the lungs match the sand from the sinkhole. There were no developmental problems or toxins present. Turns out, the wound to the victim's neck partially severed his spinal cord. Marlow would have been alive but helpless as someone dumped him in that hole. They left him to die.

(noticing intricate tiled designs on the porch)
Do you know what these are?

BOOTH

Mosaics. Come on, Bones, you've gotta give me more credit.

BRENNAN

These are impressive recreations of traditional Moroccan and Byzantine designs. Beautiful.

TAY MARLOW (O.S.)

My brother did those. What do you want?

TAY MARLOW, a small weather-beaten man, is revealed at the doorway.

BOOTH

Tay Marlow? I'm Special Agent Seeley Booth, FBI. I'm here with my partner Dr. Temperance Brennan to ask you about your brother Edwin.

CONTINUED:

TAY MARLOW
He's not here.

BOOTH
Sir, may we please come inside?

TAY MARLOW
I guess so.

CUT TO:

INT. MARLOW HOME - CONTINUOUS

Tay ushers them into a sitting room with carved wooden furniture and amazing tapestries. The men sit while Bones examines the tiled floor.

BRENNAN
Mr. Marlow, your home is striking.
The floors outside, and this one
here are almost museum quality. Did
your brother really do this?

TAY MARLOW
Designed them one by one. I helped
him: cutting the tiles, arranging
some of them. Now what's this all
about?

BOOTH
Sir, I hate to give you bad news,
but your brother is dead. His
remains were found this morning a
half hour north of here. I'm so
sorry for your loss.

TAY MARLOW
He said he was going to Atlanta to
redo a ceiling. He was supposed to
get back tomorrow.

BOOTH
I'm sorry. Do you have any other
family?

CONTINUED:

TAY MARLOW

It was just the two of us. Parents dead, no wives or girlfriends.

BOOTH

And he said he was on a business trip? But your brother was very wealthy.

TAY MARLOW

He was an artist, enjoyed the process. After he won the lottery Edwin still took clients.

BRENNAN

Did he still charge for his services?

TAY MARLOW

Yeah. He donated all the proceeds to a foundation that works to end childhood hunger. We were rough off growing up.

BOOTH

Did anyone have something against your brother?

TAY MARLOW

Well after he won big, people started popping out of the woodwork, claiming to be old friends and wanting handouts.

BRENNAN

Like you?

TAY MARLOW

No. I'd had some trouble with alcohol. I didn't even know my brother had won the lottery. Edwin sought me out. Paid for my treatment. Asked me to stay with him, gave me a job.

CONTINUED:

BOOTH

Who inherits everything now that
he's gone?

Tay walks to a nearby desk and retrieves a file folder from a
drawer.

TAY MARLOW

I'd get the house, but his assets
would be donated to the list of
charities you see there. I told him
I didn't want his money. He'd
already given me my life back.
Besides, growing up without enough
food... kids deserve better than
that. Take the will, and anything
else that's helpful. Just find out
who killed him.

CUT TO:

INT. MARLOW'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Booth and Brennan search the room for clues, opening drawers
and looking through the closet.

BOOTH

I've seen people kill for a lot
less than a two million dollar
house.

BRENNAN

And he said he was the one who cut
the tiles for Edwin's mosaics. A
tile cutter could easily have
inflicted the spinal cord damage.

Booth opens the night stand drawer and whistles at its
contents, reaching in and holding a small wrapper up for
Brennan's appraisal.

CONTINUED:

BOOTH
"Her Satisfaction" condoms. Looks
like Edwin Marlow had a secret
girlfriend.

Brennan's PHONE RINGS. She picks it up and puts it on
speaker.

CUT TO:

INT. JEFFERSONIAN MEDICO-LEGAL LAB/ PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS
Hodgins, Camille and Angela are crowded around.

HODGINS
It turns out the victim had a lady
friend.

INTERCUT CONCURRENT SCENES AS NECESSARY

BRENNAN
Your timing was statistically
improbable yet convenient. We were
just discussing that possibility.

CAMILLE
The remains show that he had sex
shortly before his death.

HODGINS
I ran the DNA through the system
and got a match. Amy Cavalluzzi
looks like our girl- arrests for
reckless driving, possession of a
controlled substance, and assault.
Sounds like a real sweetheart.

BOOTH
That bumbling public adjuster from
the crime scene... her last name
was Cavalluzzi. Are you saying she
has a relative with a rap sheet?

CONTINUED:

ANGELA

Yep. A daughter. I was able to recover the victim's text messages from his phone. The two of them corresponded every day for the last two months, and most of those texts were definitely not "PG."

HODGINS

There's something about the bad girl persona...

ANGELA

For the sake of your health I'm going to pretend I didn't hear that.

HODGINS

You are more than wild enough for me.

BOOTH

I still don't get it. What would our nice-guy victim be doing with a girl like that?

BRENNAN

Why don't we ask Amy's mother?

CUT TO:

INT. TAMPA INTERROGATION ROOM - AFTERNOON -- TWO YEARS AGO

Brennan sits while Booth paces the interrogation room. It's a far-cry from the dark paneled walls and stark mood of FBI headquarters: maple wood table and chairs, a floral-print tablecloth, even framed artwork on the walls. Candice is seated on the far side of the table, nervously picking at the rhinestones in her acrylic nails. Her PHONE RINGS again. She quickly silences it.

CONTINUED:

BOOTH

The Burnhams must really trust you.
Placing you in charge of their
money, the interior design of their
home...

CANDICE

They view me as an extension of
themselves. I'm the muscle.

SWEETS (V.O.)

Viewing someone as an extension of
another person dehumanizes them.
This woman could view herself as
their inferior.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIDAL SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Sweet's voice echoes in their earpieces. He's seated on a
plush sofa watching his fiancée DAISY WICK twirl in yet
another wedding dress with a smile on her face. After giving
Daisy two thumbs up, he continues into his phone.

SWEETS (CONT'D)

But then again, identifying herself
as "muscle" may imply that she
believes herself very powerful,
either physically or through her
ability to convince or coerce.

INTERCUT CONCURRENT SCENES AS NECESSARY

BOOTH

(to Candice)

So you wouldn't do anything but
carry out their express wishes.
You'd never do anything without
their consent.

CANDICE

That's correct.

CONTINUED:

BOOTH

Ms. Cavalluzzi, where were you last weekend?

CANDICE

At a timeshare in Orlando. Why?

BOOTH

Did you know Edwin Marlow?

CANDICE

Yes. He was actually my client over a year ago. The first home he bought after winning the lottery developed cracks within a month of him closing on the place. It was a sinkhole. I managed to get him policy limits on the property. Instead of repairing it, he sold the house for a fraction of its worth. The money from the claim combined with the money from the sale left him about even. I haven't seen him since then.

BRENNAN

Why would he be found in the backyard of another of your clients unless you were somehow involved in his death?

CANDICE

Marlow knew the Burnhams through his charity, Three Squares for Children. They are all members of the board. Edwin gave them my card when he found out they had a sinkhole. But as far as I know they weren't in town this weekend.

BOOTH

What can you tell us about Edwin Marlow's relationship with your daughter?

CONTINUED:

CANDICE

What?

BOOTH

We found evidence that suggests they were in a relationship.

CANDICE

She came along with me one afternoon when I dropped off paperwork. I had no idea. What would they be doing together?

BRENNAN

Having intercourse, apparently.

BOOTH

What she means is, you had no idea they were seeing one another?

CANDICE

No. I love my daughter but Amy's... difficult. Edwin was a truly sweet man. But not sweet enough to tolerate my daughter's behavior.

BOOTH

We'll need the sinkhole file. It may help in the investigation.

CANDICE

Sure, but I doubt you'll get anything from it unless you understand ground penetrating radar graphs.

BRENNAN

I do. I used them while looking for ritualistic burial sites in Guatemala.

CONTINUED:

Candice pushes the file across the table to them.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIDAL SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Sweets has failed to turn off his earpiece, but doesn't know it. He looks up from his chair to Daisy, who is wearing a bridal gown but frowning down at him.

DAISY

Which one do you like?

SWEETS

I like them all. You're gorgeous in everything.

DAISY

Well which do you like the best?

SWEETS

I like whichever one you like.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SWEET'S OFFICE - DAY -- PRESENT DAY

A captions reads "present day."

SWEETS

I forgot to turn my earpiece off and you heard a snippet of our conversation. So what?

BOOTH

So, Daisy has a lot to do with what happened next. Keep in mind Brennan and I were strictly partners. She'd alluded to wanting a relationship after Hannah left, but by the time I was ready to move on she... I tried. She pushed me away.

CONTINUED:

SWEETS

It makes sense. When she thought she could never have you, Dr. Brennan realized the extent of her feelings. Then when altering your personal dynamic became a real possibility, she worried those feelings weren't genuine. Dr. Brennan's abandonment issues from losing her parents caused her to retreat back to a mentality in which you were unattainable.

BOOTH

Just hear me out. When we left Tay Marlow's place it started to rain. Hard.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BOOTH'S VEHICLE/TRAVELING - EVENING -- TWO YEARS AGO

Booth is driving, Brennan again riding shotgun. Booth concludes a conversation by snapping his phone shut.

BOOTH

Well the Burnhams' alibi checks out. They were both in Vancouver when Marlow died. And James says we'll have to wait until tomorrow to get inside the house. The geotechnical engineers are grouting the sinkhole to stabilize the rest of the house tonight. We can show up in the morning.

BRENNAN

What will we do until then?

BOOTH

I can think of one thing I'd like to do...

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL BAR - LATER THAT EVENING

Booth and Brennan enter, damp from the rain. It is clear they have just run from the car.

BOOTH
Let's get a drink.

BRENNAN
Look at the specials. As you know
I typically favor beer, but in the
spirit of adventure we should
sample the local fare.
(to a bartender)
Two Bahama mamas please.

They sit and the drinks appear before them. Brennan takes a sip.

BRENNAN (CONT'D)
It's very good. Try yours.

Booth tentatively picks up the feminine-looking drink, eying it suspiciously in a way that mirrors Brennan's investigation of the apple pies. He plucks a paper umbrella from the drink and tosses it on the table. Brennan gives an encouraging smile, and he takes an experimental sip.

BOOTH
(pleasantly surprised)
Mmm, that's a lot of rum.

They smile and have only a moment to relax before Booth's PHONE RINGS. He starts to reach into his jacket, but then ignores it.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
I'm not answering it. Let's make a toast.

BRENNAN
At least look at the number. What
if it's Parker or someone at the
lab?

CONTINUED:

He pulls the phone from his pocket and cringes.

 BOOTH
It's Daisy.
 (he answers)
Booth.

CUT TO:

INT. FOUNDING FATHERS BAR IN D.C. - CONTINUOUS

 DAISY
Agent Booth, I need to talk to you.

INTERCUT CONCURRENT SCENES AS NECESSARY

 BOOTH
What's wrong? Is anyone hurt?

 DAISY
I just need a few minutes. But
could you please make sure that Dr.
Brennan can't overhear? She's my
mentor and I don't want to give her
the impression that I'm weak or
overly emotional.

Booth sighs and gives Brennan the "it's OK" sign. He points
to the lobby and she nods, indicating that she understands.

 BOOTH
Right. Because that would be
completely absurd.

Booth retreats from the NOISE OF THE BAR into the lobby.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

 BOOTH
Alright, what's going on?

CONTINUED:

DAISY

I know you and I don't really talk, but since you're Lance's closest male friend I could really use some insight into his recent behavior.

BOOTH

His closest male friend? Since when am I Sweets' best friend?

DAISY

Ever since we started planning our wedding, Lance seems really, well, bored. He won't offer an opinion on anything, from the venue to the flowers to what kind of cake we get. Today I asked him if strawberry layers would be fine and he said 'sure'.

BOOTH

So?

DAISY

So Lance is allergic to strawberries. He doesn't care about any of this. I'm thinking of calling it off entirely. It seems like he doesn't want to marry me anymore.

BOOTH

(sighing in exasperation)

Don't call it off. Just talk to him.

DAISY

It seems pretty clear that he couldn't care less. I know I have a problem with intra-personal skills. Lance has told me so himself. I've driven him away, haven't I?

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL BAR - LATER

Brennan is getting restless at the bar. She notices Booth's untouched drink. Hers is completely empty. After chewing on her straw indecisively, she leaves her seat to find him.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

After searching for him in the lobby, Brennan spots Booth sitting in a chair, facing away from her while still talking on his cell. She approaches and is about to tap him on the shoulder when he emphatically speaks up.

BOOTH

Life is about taking chances. You risk far more by not letting yourself find out if there's a chance you two could make it.

Brennan freezes and continues to listen.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

Bottom line, if you love someone you go for it... even if you think your own shortcomings might cause bumps in your relationship. You owe it to both of you to keep trying.

Brennan darts past Booth towards the hotel's front door and into his line of vision.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

Bones, wait! Where are you going?

Booth hangs up and chases after.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. HOTEL PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

The rain continues to fall as Brennan retreats towards her hotel building, Booth chasing behind. The sky is dark and threatening, with lightning occasionally striking overhead as they navigate through the vast parking lot. Booth catches up to her.

BOOTH

Bones, wait up! Wow, you can really move when you want to.

Brennan turns to face him.

BRENNAN

I heard what you said about owing it to yourself to take a chance, and that if you loved someone you had no choice... I already told you that I can't be with you romantically!

BOOTH

Now let me explain.

BRENNAN

(cutting him off)

No Booth! Why would you continue to pressure me?

BOOTH

I wasn't referring to us. I was simply giving some advice. But now that we're on the topic. You're right. I haven't given up. I'm miserable that I'm always with you but can't really *be with you*!

She turns away and tries to continue towards the nearest two-story hotel building. He holds her by both arms and forces her to look at him.

CONTINUED:

BOOTH (CONT'D)

You're scared. You're scared of what you can't rationalize and you're scared that if you let yourself love someone, they might leave you. But that's stupid, Bones, because you are so damned easy to love. And I would never do that.

She begins to jerk away from him.

BRENNAN

Let me go! I don't want to have to hurt you.

BOOTH

You can't hurt me any more than you already have, Bones. But go ahead, retreat just like you've always done.

He lets go, but she stands her ground.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

I've seen you be threatened with torture and not give an inch. I've seen you stare unflinchingly at some of the most despicable examples of violence I've ever seen. But you're acting like a coward, Bones.

BRENNAN

You're not the only one who gets to be noble, Booth. I'm protecting you from me! I don't have your giving heart.

He grabs her again.

BOOTH

You're wrong. I know you do.

CONTINUED:

BRENNAN
Just let me go.

BOOTH
I can't. I love you.

He puts an arm around her shoulder and draws her to him. Brennan shakes her head in protest. The motion begins as a gesture of hurried comfort but Booth suddenly settles his mouth on hers. She moves her hand to the back of his head to kiss him back. Suddenly she grabs his hair hard and pulls his face away from hers.

BRENNAN
I am not a coward.

She pulls him to her again, engaging in a heated kiss.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SWEET'S OFFICE - PRESENT DAY

Both Sweets and Booth are quiet and sullen. Booth looks like he's on the edge of tears, but smiles at the memory.

BOOTH
I swear, her skin smelled like
lotus blossoms and apple pie.

A silent beat.

SWEETS
Wow. Daisy actually did have a
part to play.

BOOTH
Yeah. All because she thought she
was losing you.

SWEETS
I was just trying to make sure she
had her dream wedding.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

SWEETS (CONT'D)

I don't care about table runners or
the dress or the cake. I just
wanted her to be happy.

BOOTH

Lucky for you. Your story worked
out.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOTEL BAR - THE NEXT MORNING -- TWO YEARS AGO

Booth sits at a table near the breakfast buffet. He stares
off in a daze, not touching his plate. His phone RINGS and
he snaps out of it, answering.

BOOTH

This is Booth.

LONNIE JAMES (V.O.)

It's Lonnie James.

BOOTH

Yeah?

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN BACKYARD CRIME SCENE - CONTINUOUS

LONNIE JAMES

It pounded so hard here last night that we had to stop
grouting early, but we still managed to stabilize some rooms
this morning, despite that Cavalluzzi woman showing up.

INTERCUT CONCURRENT SCENES AS NECESSARY

Brennan enters the breakfast area and spots Booth. She
builds a plate of fruit and joins Booth across the table as
he continues on the phone.

CONTINUED:

LONNIE JAMES (CONT'D)

She came by here and suggested that her clients might receive a bigger settlement if we let the entire house sink, but there's no way it would make a difference. Those homeowners will receive a 'Catastrophic Loss' payment no matter what. That's the maximum payment allowable. She doesn't seem to grasp the fact that a murder case takes precedent over her little insurance dispute. Anyways, I need four hours to make sure the other rooms are safe to enter before you come by.

BOOTH

Got it.

Booth hangs up. An awkward moment passes.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

We can get into the house at noon. In the meantime we could pick up where we left off last night?

BRENNAN

Well, I could be convinced.

Both lean in as if to kiss.

BRENNAN (CONT'D)

Whoever was on the phone won't miss us?

BOOTH

No. It was just Lonnie James. Though he did mention...
(catching onto a clue)
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

BOOTH (CONT'D)

that the homeowners would receive a catastrophic loss settlement check no matter what, but that Candice Cavalluzzi stopped by the crime scene this morning and tried to get the police to stop stabilization.

BRENNAN

Why would she want the rest of the house to fall in the sinkhole? By having the FBI do free repairs she would have been able to pocket more commission from the insurance company's payout.

BOOTH

She's hiding something. We need to get inside that house. Until then, we should meet with Amy Cavalluzzi and find out what she knows.

CUT TO:

INT. JEFFERSONIAN MEDICO-LEGAL LAB/ ANGELA'S AREA - DAY

Angela and Daisy look at a large digital projection of the victim's neck wound.

ANGELA

Few kerf marks. We aren't looking for a serrated knife or hacksaw.

DAISY

The grooves on the vertebrae are more consistent with a hacking motion... a butcher knife?

ANGELA

No.

DAISY

Scissors?

CONTINUED:

ANGELA
No.

DAISY
Spork?

ANGELA
Really?

DAISY
Just trying to add some levity.
What about a tile cutter? Dr.
Brennan said the victim's brother
worked with mosaics.

ANGELA
I tried that first. The implement
that did this gets thinner at the
point and then gains width towards
the handle. It was a sturdy
instrument, but comparatively
blunt. I've sent Dr. Brennan photos
of the cleaned wound. Hopefully
she'll get back to us soon.

DAISY
Maybe a katana then?

ANGELA
No. Our weapon does have a curved
blade, but what we're looking for
has a more pronounced angle...
almost crescent shaped.

Daisy starts to guess again but Angela holds up her hand in a
"stop" motion.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
Let's just wait until Hodgins gets
back with analysis of particulates.
That will help us narrow it down.

CONTINUED:

DAISY

I'm sorry, Ang. I know I've been unusually difficult. It's just that ever since Lance and I got engaged, he's become... apathetic.

ANGELA

Sweets? Apathetic? But he's like a cute little puppy that follows you around and accuses you of having a dysfunctional psyche.

DAISY

He's apathetic. As in totally disinterested with anything having to do with our wedding.

Hodgins enters carrying a detailed report showing the chemical composition of swabs.

DAISY (CONT'D)

I mean, what if we end up like you two? Get engaged only to break up before our big day?

ANGELA

But we got back together, remember?

DAISY

You got married in a jail cell on a spur of the moment decision. Love stories like that don't happen to everyone.

The Angelatron lights up and buzzes. The three of them look up at the screen, the contents of which are obscured from the viewer. A moment later each furrows their brow in confusion.

HODGINS

(in excitement)

No way!

DAISY

That can't be right, can it?

CONTINUED:

ANGELA
I'll run it again.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SWEET'S OFFICE - DAY -- PRESENT DAY

SWEETS
So everyone was making
determinations about my mental
state behind my back?

BOOTH
Welcome to our world. Do you want
me to go on, or not?

SWEETS
Sorry, I just feel so exposed.
Where were you?

BOOTH
Going to see our prime suspect,
remember?

SWEETS
Yeah, I was tapped into the
surveillance camera at the police
station.

CUT TO:

INT. TAMPA INTERROGATION ROOM - MORNING -- TWO YEARS AGO

Booth and Brennan are seated across from AMY CAVALLUZZI, a very pretty young woman who has been ravaged early by hard living. Her hair and clothing appear mildly mussed.

BOOTH
Amy Cavalluzzi. You mind telling me
the nature of your relationship
with Edwin Marlow?

CONTINUED:

AMY

Those pills weren't even mine.
They're my mother's you can ask
her.

SWEETS (O.C.)

She's lying, Booth. See how she's
gripping the chair and leaning to
one side? That's withdrawal. This
girl's an addict.

BOOTH

Either you cooperate or we charge
you with wrongful possession of a
controlled substance. Were you
involved with Edwin Marlow?

AMY

Yeah. We were hooking up.

BOOTH

Doesn't seem like you two exactly
ran with the same crowds. How did
you meet?

AMY

I looked him up. So what?

BRENNAN

What, did you make a list of
unmarried lottery winners and check
off names until you found one who
was lonely?

BOOTH

Or maybe your mother told you that
she knew a nice rich guy that would
take care of you, so you could
finally move out of her place.

AMY

My mom mentioned in passing that
she was representing him.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

AMY (CONT'D)

I wanted to be introduced but she wouldn't do it. She said he was out of my league. So I found his number in her filing cabinet and called him. A poor guy with nothing wins the lotto and continues to work, thought it could make a good book. Everything else just kind of happened.

BRENNAN

You expect us to believe that you're an author? It says here that you barely finished high school.

AMY

My teachers didn't like me.
Doesn't mean I'm not smart.

BOOTH

Alright, let's see your work.

AMY

My work?

BOOTH

Yes, Amy, the story you've been writing about Edwin Marlow.

AMY

I didn't finish it, alright? I moved on to other projects.

SWEETS (O.C.)

Good idea. If you want to crack through her lying, you need to elicit a negative emotional response. Get her even more riled up. Her deceptions will become more transparent.

BOOTH

Edwin's family and friends didn't know about you, Amy.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

BOOTH (CONT'D)

Now I can understand why. He was probably ashamed to be seen with you. That must piss you off. Knowing that your rich boy toy wouldn't even want his family to know you existed.

AMY

You don't know me!

BOOTH

(bluffing)

I know that you tried to get Edwin to put you in his will!

AMY

That money should have been mine! I put in the time. I had to listen to him keep saying he could "reform" me.

BRENNAN

But instead he gave all that money away to charities. That must have made you angry.

AMY

I want a lawyer.

CUT TO:

INT. TAMPA POLICE HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Brennan and Booth walk out the door and down the hallway.

BRENNAN

She has motive.

BOOTH

But without a way to place her at the crime scene, it's all just speculation.

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CONTINUED:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. JEFFERSONIAN MEDICO-LEGAL LAB/ ANGELA'S AREA - DAY --
TWO YEARS AGO

A caption reads "two years ago." Angela, Hodgins and Daisy look at the projection screen that continues to be obscured from the viewer.

ANGELA
This is the right murder weapon.
We have to tell her.

Angela calls Brennan on speaker.

CUT TO:

INT. BOOTH'S VEHICLE/TRAVELING - CONTINUOUS

Brennan answers from Booth's passenger seat.

BRENNAN
Hello?

INTERCUT CONCURRENT SCENES AS NECESSARY

ANGELA
Brennan, we have a hit on our
mystery weapon. The damage is most
consistent with a medieval battle
axe, if you can believe it.

BRENNAN
That would make sense.

She casts her eyes to Booth. Getting distracted for a moment.

CONTINUED:

BRENNAN (CONT'D)

The, ah, depth and shape of the wound are consistent with damage I saw on deceased persons from Middle Age execution sites- clumsy executioners with dull weapons caused many of the condemned to endure several strokes of the axe before they actually expired.

ANGELA

So this guy was bumped off at a Renaissance Fair or something?

BRENNAN

Oh, the Renaissance was a period of cultural enlightenment that Europe experienced after the Middle Ages and before what we refer to as the Modern Era. Your confusion is understandable.

(looking over to Booth)

Most Renaissance Fairs are rife with anachronism, referencing clothing, weapons and historical figures from the Early Middle Ages all the way through the Elizabethan period.

ANGELA

(picking up on her friend's tone and hesitation)

Ah, it was a joke, sweetie. You seem preoccupied this morning. Is everything OK?

Brennan blanches, as if her hand has been caught in the cookie jar. She can't get her response out fast enough.

CONTINUED:

BRENNAN

Yes, perfectly fine. Confer with Dr. McGraw in European history, but I'm fairly certain that the victim was in fact incapacitated by the striking motion of a battle ax from the High Middle Ages- an extremely dull one.

Without warning Brennan disconnects the call.

CUT TO:

INT. JEFFERSONIAN MEDICO-LEGAL LAB/ ANGELA'S AREA -
CONTINUOUS

Angela scoffs and looks over to Hodgins, who is shaking his head and frowning into his report.

ANGELA

What? Just tell me so we can get all the frustration out in one fell swoop and move on by lunchtime, OK? You people are killing my good mood, here.

HODGINS

Battle axes of the High Middle Ages, the period of the Crusades, were made primarily of iron and steel. This wound contained rust-preventative primer and modern paint. This axe either hit something else before striking the victim, or it's a modern replica.

DAISY

(interjecting)

Hey, Dr. Hodgins? You're a guy. What's Lance's deal?

CONTINUED:

HODGINS

Me, try to get in the head of a psychologist? No thanks, Daisy. Just ask him yourself.

CUT TO:

INT. BOOTH'S VEHICLE/TRAVELING - MOMENTS LATER

Brennan's eyes bore into Booth as he drives. He turns towards her and smiles, pulling his reflective sunglasses down from his eyes to give her a flirty wink. Her face stayed glued in an expression of concern.

BOOTH

(trying to cheer her)
Bones, you're staring at me an awful lot this today. Can't wait for another rainstorm tonight?

BRENNAN

Booth, I think we should agree before we reach the crime scene that regardless of what happened last night, we need to maintain a professional demeanor. It would be inappropriate for anyone to know what transpired between us.

BOOTH

Sure, Bones. What goes on between us... is just between us. Come on, you know I have a good poker face.

He illustrates by giving her a mock frown with pursed lips and a furrowed brow. She sighs and turns back towards the road. He sees her hands fiddling nervously with the buckle on her bag, and reaches over to take her hand in his. She tenses.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

Do you regret what happened last night?

CONTINUED:

BRENNAN

No, of course not. I just...
there's going to be an adjustment
phase to this new aspect of our
relationship.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN FRONTYARD CRIME SCENE

Booth and Brennan arrive at the crime scene and walk up the drive. Lonnie James waves them on as he eats something from a foil wrapper, pausing to wipe crumbs from his mustache with every bite.

BOOTH

(To Brennan)

I wish we would have remembered to
eat during breakfast.

BRENNAN

If only continental breakfast
included pie. Then I'm sure you'd
be quite sated.

BOOTH

(louder, to Lonnie James)

What is that? It smells awesome.

James pauses to swallow and then turns the wrapper for Booth to see the burrito logo.

LONNIE JAMES

It's from down the street. Potato,
egg and cheese with a little bit of
spicy green chile sauce.

Booth eyes it longingly.

LONNIE JAMES (CONT'D)

You want one? Feel free. I always
buy extras. Check out the cooler
in my passenger seat.

CONTINUED:

Booth's gone a moment later, his tie practically blowing out behind him. Brennan notices and smiles.

LONNIE JAMES (CONT'D)
So how are you two this morning?

Brennan remains silent and walks past him through the front door.

CUT TO:

INT. CRIME SCENE HOME - CONTINUOUS

The living room is in a state of complete disarray. Expensive couches are littered with debris. Lamps are overturned onto the plush carpets, and items that had once been proudly displayed on an impressive mantle are now smashed into the floor. Brennan scans the area for crucial details. An overturned sofa table catches her eye. She bends over to examine the bursts of yellow and purple color, and picks up a delicate bloom with her tweezers.

BOOTH
Mmmm...

Without turning around, she knows that he has entered the room behind her.

BRENNAN
Ogling as I collect evidence?
Hardly the professional behavior
you promised earlier.

She slowly cranes her neck around to see him unabashedly staring at her rear end as he gnaws a huge bite off of his breakfast. She shoots him a look that promises a serious lecture later.

BOOTH
What? No... This is just a really
good burrito.

She rolls her eyes and resumes collecting blooms into a specimen bag.

CONTINUED:

BRENNAN
Look. Orchid blossoms.

She bends over farther to reach.

BOOTH
Whoa!

BRENNAN
Booth, James already suspects that something is different. If you don't stop this very second I'll...

She turns to continue, but stops when she sees he isn't staring at her. Behind the front door next to the coat rack stands a full suit of armor. A curved axe is clenched in the right gauntlet, with its handle resting on a heavy wooden base.

BOOTH
Didn't the squints say the weapon was a battle axe?

Bones lifts the camera around her neck and snaps some photographs before taking a swab of the blade's edge and placing it on a strip for a TMB color test. Though nothing is visible on the axe, within seconds the strip turns a bright blue-green. She nods to Booth.

BRENNAN
It's blood.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RUNDOWN MOTEL - EVENING -- PRESENT DAY

Brennan sits rocking a sleeping Christine. She looks miserable.

MAX
Honey, try to get some rest. We need to move on again in the morning.

CONTINUED:

BRENNAN
She's so big. Booth wouldn't
recognize her.

MAX
They grow up much faster than you
want them to.

BRENNAN
Christine deserves to be around her
father. And Booth needs me.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CRIME SCENE HOME - EVENING -- TWO YEARS AGO

The local police begin filing out. James, Booth and Brennan
all look weary.

LONNIE JAMES
You almost done in here? Don't
mean to rush you but I'm about out
of steam.

BRENNAN
Just a bit longer Detective James.
There were no prints on the axe. I
need to find out who was in this
house when Marlow was killed.

LONNIE JAMES
Maybe he just fell?

BOOTH
We can get this, James. Go home.
You look exhausted.

LONNIE JAMES
Yeah. My eyes are starting to fog
over. The wall behind you looks
all shadowy.

CONTINUED:

Lonnie James starts to leave. Brennan turns around and follows the path of his gaze to the wall behind the suit of armor.

BRENNAN
Wait. Look at this.

She gets up and runs a gloved hand down the wall.

BOOTH
The color doesn't look right.

BRENNAN
That's because portions have been painted over. Look, the coloration is a fraction lighter than the rest of the wall.

LONNIE JAMES
Someone painted over evidence.

BRENNAN
I can scan this to Angela and find out exactly what they were trying to hide.

BEGIN MUSICAL MONTAGE: ("PARADISE CIRCUS" BY MASSIVE ATTACK)

-- Angela is seen in her office typing codes as she looks at scanned images of the crime scene wall.

-- Booth and Brennan are at a romantic dinner, clearly enjoying one another's company.

-- Angela moves her stylus. The top layer of paint is removed from the projection, revealing blood spatter underneath. She zooms in. A section of smeared blood looks like someone attempted to scrub it off. Angela zooms in again and enhances the image. There's a fingerprint on the edge.

-- Booth and Brennan walk hand in hand from his rental car towards the hotel room door.

CONTINUED:

-- The fingerprint is scanned and dozens of faces quickly flash by on Angela's screen. A green blinking light alerts Angela, who looks up. The screen reads "Match Found"

-- Brennan and Booth pause after unlocking the door, looking at one another before taking their first step inside. At that moment Brennan's phone RINGS. Her face changes as she receives the name of the killer. They quickly change direction and race back towards the car.

END MUSICAL MONTAGE

EXT. DARKENED HOUSE - NIGHT

Booth knocks forcefully. Brennan stands behind him. Candice opens the door. Booth starts towards her.

BOOTH
Candice Cavalluzzi, you're under
arrest for the murder of Edwin
Marlow.

Candice turns and flees inside.

CUT TO:

INT. CAVALLUZZI HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Candice runs towards the kitchen. Booth races in after her as she turns a corner. He catches up and begins to cuff her.

BOOTH
You really are faster than you
look.

He turns to find Amy shaking but aiming a gun at his head from the middle of the room.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
Put down the gun, Ms. Cavalluzzi.
You don't want to do this.

CONTINUED:

AMY

Get the hell out of here.

CANDICE

Amy, what do you think you're doing? She didn't kill Edwin. It was me. I lied about the shareholder's meeting. I went to the house to check in on the damage and found them both inside.

BOOTH

Amy, I want you to slowly place the weapon on the ground and step away.

AMY

We just wanted privacy. With Edwin's brother and my mom around all the time, I just wanted to find a place where we could be alone.

CANDICE

So you took my key, I know. Edwin saw me, and he panicked. He tried to leave... I grabbed him to slow him down, to talk to him. He lost his balance and fell back against the blade. It was an accident.

BOOTH

If it were an accident you would have called 9-1-1. But instead you shoved him in the sinkhole and left him to suffocate to death. Then you tried to erase any evidence he'd been there. But yours weren't the only prints we found in his blood. Amy, put the weapon down. If you go peacefully I can recommend the DA make a deal with you.

Amy advances. It's clear she has no intention of complying. She shakes and struggles to pull back the hammer. From the side hallway Brennan quietly approaches.

CONTINUED:

Booth can't see her from his vantage. The moment Amy's finger presses against the trigger, Brennan shoots. Amy falls to the ground dead and Brennan races forward to make sure Booth is alright. They stand silently a moment.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
If you hadn't have been here...

BRENNAN
But I am here.

BOOTH
How long have you had a gun?

CUT TO:

INT. BOOTH'S HOTEL ROOM, LATER THAT NIGHT -- TWO YEARS AGO

The room is dark. Lightning strikes temporarily illuminate the room through the blinds. Booth and Brennan enter passionately kissing. Booth slams the door and presses her against it. Both are desperate, clinging to one another, expending years of tension in a frantic tangle. Both shed their shirts and tumble onto the bed.

BOOTH
Say it, Bones.

BRENNAN
I want you.

BOOTH
No. You know what I mean. I know you feel it. I can see it in your eyes. You've admitted it to yourself. Now, admit it to me.

BRENNAN
Booth, I... I can't. I'm sorry.

She quickly leaves, leaving Booth alone in the empty space.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SWEET'S OFFICE - EVENING -- PRESENT DAY

SWEETS

And it ended? Just like that?

BOOTH

For then. She was scared. Later she said that in her mind, pushing me away was one more way of rescuing me... from her.

SWEETS

Now, after everything that's happened, do you feel that you should have let her?

CUT TO:

INT. RUNDOWN MOTEL - EVENING -- PRESENT DAY

Brennan sits talking to Max, still rocking baby Christine.

BRENNAN

I told him I wasn't a coward and then I ran away. I was scared that I'd hurt him. And now I have. Again.

MAX

You have courage.

BRENNAN

But it took Vincent Nigel Murray dying in front of me to realize it. I was like a bone that had partially knitted in a crooked way after a break: I had to be rebroken or I could never fully heal. I can't be a coward again. I have to find a way to go home to the rest of my family.

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CONTINUED:

Max takes something out of his pocket and places it in her hand.

CUT TO:

INT. SWEET'S OFFICE- EVENING--CONTINUOUS

BOOTH'S PHONE RINGS. He motions to Sweets and answers it.

BOOTH

Booth.

BRENNAN

It's me.

END SHOW